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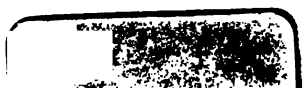
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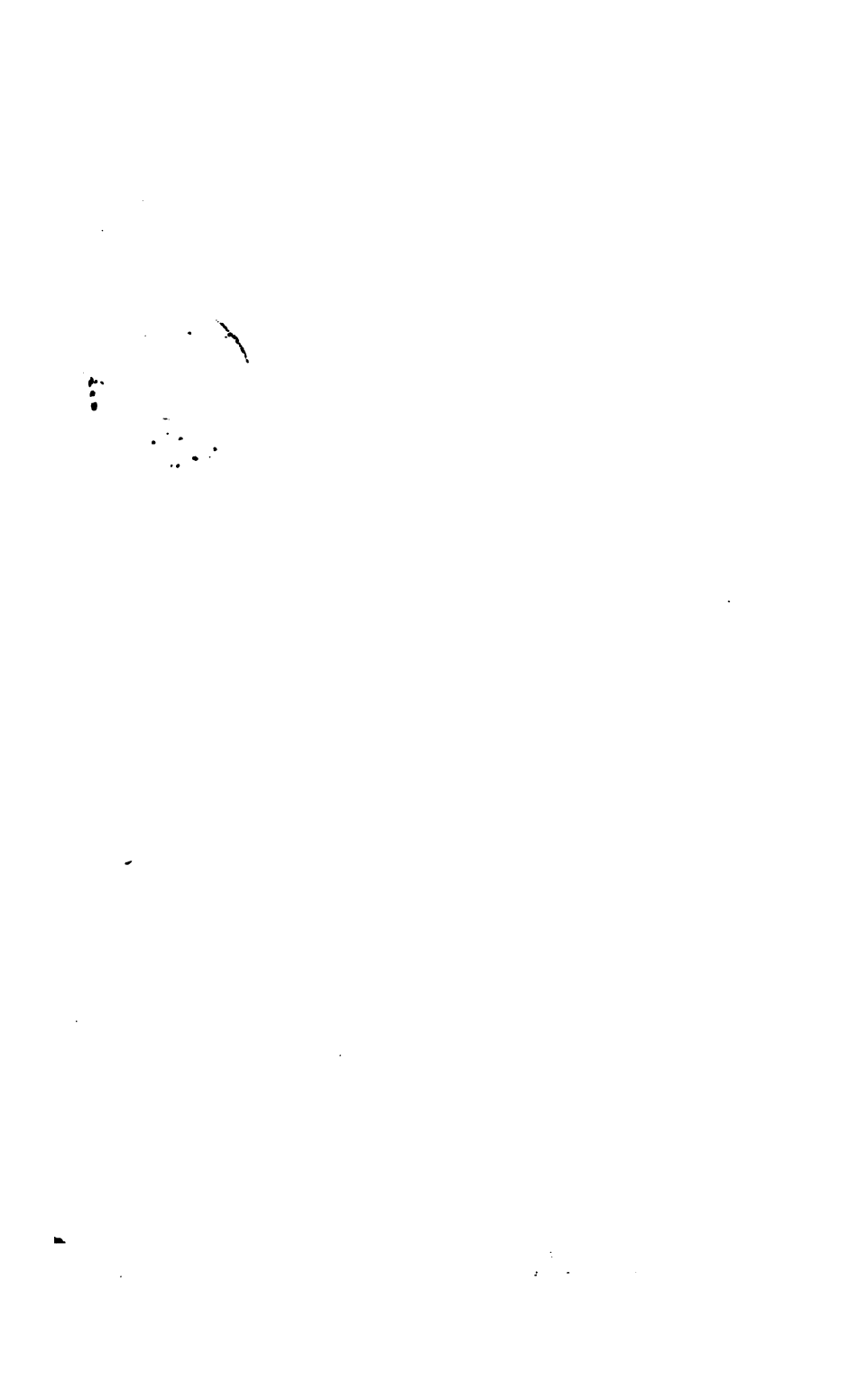
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THE GIRL HE MARRIED.

VOLUME III.



THE GIRL HE MARRIED.

A Novel.



BY



JAMES GRANT,

AUTHOR OF "THE ROMANCE OF WAR," ETC.

"O! good, your worship, tell it of all things; for I mightily delight in hearing love stories."

SANCHO PANZA.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

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THE GIRL HE MARRIED.



CHAPTER I.

ON BOARD THE "GOLDEN DREAM."

SUPPOSING, of course, that there was not a soul on board in whom he could feel the slightest interest, and wishing to be as far as possible on the long, long voyage of many thousand miles which lay before him, Lennard Blair lay long in his berth next day, having no desire to encounter a host of sea-sick passengers either on deck or in the saloon, and gave full swing without reserve to the unprofitable task of worrying himself by useless reflections on the past; a tone of mind or tendency of thought to which, no doubt, a few qualms of the *mal-de-mer* contributed, while the *Golden Dream*, a stately Clyde-built ship of two thousand tons' burthen, and more than five hundred horse-power, steamed on through St. George's Channel with all her canvas set, and a rippling

torrent of black smoke issuing from each of her short and stunted funnels, which were painted red, with a rake aft.

In the evening, however, he could not resist the invitation of the steward to "turn up" (while supplying him with a libation of brandy and seltzer) and take a last view of the land, which was then sinking into the waste of waters on the port quarter. Accordingly he dressed in haste, muffled himself and came on deck in time to watch, wistfully, from the mizen rigging, up which he went a little way, the faint grey stripe—the last of Britain's isle—melting away at the horizon, and he was told by the boatswain, Mr. Kit Kentlege, a personage of whom we shall hear more hereafter, and with whom an exchange of tobacco-pouches on the previous evening had established an acquaintance, that it was "Saint David's Head on the coast of Pembroke; and lower down, out o' sight a'most, lay Milford Haven;" that now busy and crowded port, the name of which is so full of the memories of Shakespeare, the cave of Belarius, and the sorrows of Imogen—the gentle, the tender, and the true.

There were few passengers on deck, and these were chiefly men, who were smoking abaft the funnels, because there the motion of the ship was less felt; so Lennard Blair had the poop nearly to himself.

There were, he knew, some lady-passengers on board; but now all were below; the evening was

louring, the sea and wind were heavy; dark clouds enveloped all the sky, save where a red and fiery streak lingered to the westward, and against it, the waves, as if traced by a brush dipped deep in ink or indigo, were rising and falling alternately in monotonous succession, while, with both her engines clanking, panting, straining, puffing, and literally tearing a passage through the foaming sea, the great steamship flew on, the billows racing past on either side, to meet and bubble, seethe and boil in her long white wake astern.

Occupied entirely with his own thoughts, somewhat soothed by the whistling of the wind aloft, by the hiss of the careering waves below, and by the sense of rapid motion and progression, though personally quiescent and inactive, Lennard leaned over the taffrail and gazed dreamily down on the sea, on the ship's pale wake, which he could trace for miles astern—homeward—through the darkening sea; for under the clouds of the coming night it was darkening fast and far.

Away to the westward, where the fiery streak was lingering, but where the clouds were setting darkest, he knew the coast of Ireland lay—the mountains of Munster—but no trace of them was visible, for some eighty miles of water rolled between, and this time to-morrow should see the *Golden Dream* far out on the wide Atlantic. "What is it," asks a novelist, "that so inevitably inspires sad and depressing thoughts as we walk the deck of some craft in the silence of the night's

dark hours? No sense of danger near, we hold on our course swiftly and steadily, cleaving the dark waves, and bending gracefully beneath the freshening breeze. Yet still the motion, which in the bright sunshine of the noonday tells of joy and gladness, brings now no touch of pleasure to our hearts." Amid the thoughts, the time, the place, and the utter novelty of his situation excited, there were periods when his soul became filled with intense pity for Hesbia. Then all his old love would return; a longing, aching desire to go back devoured him with the desperate hope that he might see her once again—speak to her, look into her eyes once more, and implore her to be true to him, if not too late!

But all this was impossible now, for the great ship was rolling ceaselessly on and on—and every revolution of her inexorable wheels increased the distance that was—it might be—happily yawning between them. Then a sullen desperation took possession of his heart, and luckily for him, his pride and wounded self-esteem found a temporary solace in rage and contempt; thus ever and anon were a thousand wild fancies careering through his mind.

His past life seemed to be partially blotted out, and a new one lay before him—nay, had actually begun; a new home, new friends, and new faces were there, and all the old seemed far, far away, or to have been looked on, long, long ago. Yet still in vivid recollection, he saw Blairavon with its slated

turrets and crow-stepped gables rising above the old forest trees; the white-washed walls of humbler Oakwoodlee, with old Elsie and Steinie Hislop dozing about in the sunshine that cast the shadow of the hills upon the woods and river; there was the Charter Stone too, with its grove of solemn Scottish pines; yonder rose Craigellon with its deep and silent loch, and the trysting style—pshaw! he turned his face resolutely to windward and resolved to think no more.

Among the passengers were few who, to him, seemed of much interest. Some were gentlemen of colour, well-bred and pleasant fellows, returning to Hispaniola and Cuba; a British officer or two returning from leave, and *en route* to join their regiment at Jamaica; a Spanish skipper, who was a sullen and quarrelsome fellow; a Yankee supercargo, who was somewhat loquacious and possessed of a large organ of curiosity; there was also a Frenchman of the *corps diplomatique*; but there were none apparently bound for Vera Cruz, or that part of Mexico, save himself, a Spanish lady and gentleman (neither of whom he had seen), and a couple of wealthy sugar-planters, for the mouth of the Rio Tampico, the last port at which the *Golden Dream* was to touch ere she got up her steam again for old England and the Mersey.

The sound of a female voice singing in the saloon below and accompanying herself on a piano, lured him to the break of the poop, where the fire-buckets hung, and he lingered near the door from whence a

flood of light was streaming forward on a group of weather-beaten tars and grimy engineers, who were also listening.

Her voice was full, deep, and flexible; exquisitely tender too; the instrument was a very fine one, and as she played and sang, her performance was both brilliant and pleasing; but the words were so much in consonance with his own thoughts that they stirred the heart of Lennard strangely.

"Spanish—pure Spanish every word!" thought he as he paused and bent his ear to listen. "'Todos piensan que no quiero'—it is an old song of Pedro de Padillas."

"The flame that burns within my heart
Can find no outlet through my tongue,
And so they know not that the smart
Has sunk so deep or burned so long;
And thus they call the mighty throng
Of passion,—fleeting whim, while I
Despairing die!"

"The tumult busy in my breast,
I name not; so—short-sighted men!
They call me, as they deem me, blest,
And turning oft will say again
To me, 'You never knew love's pain,
O happy, happy maid!'—while I
Despairing die!"

She was still singing the last of the six verses of which Padillas' lament is formed, when he threw off his reefing-jacket, and softly entering the saloon, passed up between the double row of tables, round which the passengers were seated in groups, the

ladies sewing, reading, or chatting, the gentlemen at cards, chess, or backgammon; but all had paused for a time to listen to the fair musician, who was seated unseen within a small after-cabin, formed between the stern and rudder-case, on each side of which an arched door gave entrance to it.

The long saloon-cabin was magnificent, and lighted by many lamps, which swung from the beams in chains of bronze. It was fitted up in a kind of Romanesque style, with arched doorways, having elaborate Tuscan pilasters, capitals, and archivolts, the keystone of each being the head of a faun or satyr half hidden in vine-leaves. All the woodwork was of dark oak with gilded mouldings. Bronze statues in niches that were lined with mirror-glass, alternated with views of South American scenery and life, all of which Lennard hoped to see in reality; and one or two of the illustrations were historical, such as the landing of Hernan Cortez and his cavaliers amid the wondering natives who crowded that strange and sunny shore; Vasco Nunez de Balboa opening his helmet with joy on beholding the vast expanse of the Southern sea; Pizarro dying beneath the daggers of his enemies, and applying his lips to kiss the cross which his finger had traced with his own blood upon the marble floor.

Others showed the castle of San Juan de Uloa at Vera Cruz, with the volcano of Tustla in full flame; the alameda of Mexico, with black-robed monks and bare-legged arrieros, planters in broad

hats and striped ponchos, galopinas at market, and donnas flirting through the sticks of their fans, with the handsome gachupins or Spaniards of the province; there was the vast plain of Toluca, with herds of wild cattle and troops of wilder horsemen careering across it amid clouds of fiery dust; here were soldiers, muleteers, and robbers fighting in a wild barranca or ravine; yonder were the vast chain of the Cordilleras, with their bases of brilliant verdure and their peaks of eternal snow, with all manner of wild animals in the foreground, from the fierce venados or giant stags of New California to the chattering monkeys who swing by their tails in the woods of Anahuac.

It was an epitome of the strange land he was going to see.

The rudder-case was completely framed in mirrors, and round it ran a fernery or cabinet of glass, about three feet high, filled with the rarest exotics. The little inner cabin beyond was a species of half-circular boudoir for the exclusive accommodation of the ladies. It was exquisitely fitted up, and a soft divan of crimson satin, stuffed with down feathers, was placed round it from the stern to the bulk-head on each side. Herein stood the piano, and it was not until he made his way quite up to one of the open arched entrances, that Lennard was able to see the fair performer; and while she was slowly repeating, by request of some one, the last verse, he was compelled to overhear the whispers of a whist party concerning her.

"She is awfully handsome, I can tell you," lisped Ensign Algernon Sidney Jones, of H.B.M. 5th West India Regiment, who was on his way to rejoin at Up Park camp, (and who wore his hair parted in the middle, and was more particular than a young girl about the whiteness of his hands) to a sallow-visaged planter from some Penn on the Cabaritta river.

"Oui, Monsieur," chimed in the fat little French diplomatist, who was bound for some official situation in the province of Hayti, and consequently had the inevitable red ribbon of the *Ordre* at his button-hole; "such eyes she has,—parbleu! one might light a cigar at them."

"I assisted her to grapes at dinner to-day," resumed the warrior of the 5th West India, playing with his long fair whiskers, "carefully selecting for her with the embossed scissors the sweet muscatel, which I soon found she preferred to the dark Hamburgers—by Jove I did!" and the handsome, stupid fellow laughed and looked as if he ought to be envied, and had done or said something clever.

"Ah—vrai—a good taste she has, Monsieur, even in that."

"I mean to cut in for some fun with her to-night—by Jove, I do!"

"But her guardian—her father, Monsieur," said M. Fabien, the little Frenchman, with an air of mock propriety, but with a wicked twinkle in his eye.

"Bah! the old fellow is in his berth as sick as seventeen dogs—at least the steward says so.

Play, Captain Trocadero—a spade led,” he added to his partner, a short and thick-set Spaniard of very sinister aspect, who had also paused in his game to listen.

“Nunca gano—demonio!” (I never win) growled the Spaniard; “Si Señor—spada,” and then he added, after throwing down the card, “que bonita! —bonita? par cielo, parece tan hermosa como un angel!”*

“With her dark eyes and golden hair, she is a veritable little Lucrezia Borgia!” resumed the Frenchman;—“thanks, Monsieur le Capitaine—but I trump your spade. What is her name?”

“No one knows anything except that her old friend, whatever he may be, always calls her Donna Dora,” said Mr. Jones; “queer, ain’t it—do you know anything of her, Mr. Nutmeg?”

“Snakes and alligators! only that she is a woman,” replied the supercargo, whose country there could be no doubt about, and whom Ensign Jones viewed superciliously and with elevated eyebrows.

When Lennard entered the after-cabin or boudoir—or had penetrated so far as etiquette permitted, to the door thereof, he saw seated at the piano, with her back to him, a young girl of striking appearance. She had tossed her tiny hat with its veil and ruby feather on the divan; an Indian shawl of alternate stripes of yellow, red, and black, was

* How pretty!—pretty? by Heaven she is beautiful as an angel!

carelessly thrown over her shoulders, but half-falling from them, and he could see by the reflection of the mirrors, that she had a pure and beautifully-cut profile, with dark violet eyes, and a shower of golden hair, which seemed heavy enough to bend her compact head and delicate white neck, and that she was perilously handsome and attractive.

Young ladies have a secret and intuitive sense when a gentleman is hovering near, as if their pretty eyes could see behind as well as before ; or it might be, that she caught the figure of Lennard Blair reflected in one of the many mirrors, for she turned herself sharply round on her piano-stool, and a sudden exclamation of mutual recognition escaped both.

She proved to be "the little foreign adventuress," as he had supposed her—the young lady of the lost tickets at the Preston Station ; and starting at once from her seat, she approached him, with a blush of confusion, pride, and shame suffusing her whole face.

CHAPTER II.

DONNA DORA DOMINGA.

“**Y**OU here, sir!” she exclaimed, in her pretty foreign accent, which was mingled with the best style of an English one. “Oh, how glad I am! how happy! But how strange it is!”

“We are to be fellow-voyagers it would appear,” replied Lennard, bowing politely, yet with a little coldness in his tone and constraint in his manner, which she was quick enough to perceive.

“My extreme satisfaction arises from the circumstance that we shall now be able to repay your great kindness to us at that odious and noisy railway station, where the picaros stole the Señor Saavedra’s pocket-book, tickets, money, and everything. *This*,” she added, turning to two ladies who sat near her, “is the kind gentleman of whom I have told you, and but for whose politeness and generosity an affront (her eyes flashed as she spoke), yes, a most terrible affront, had been put upon us. Ay de mi! what must you have thought of us—the Señor and me—never to have heard of us again?”

"Really I had other things to think of; and if some mistake——"

"The Señor Saavedra is *so* stupid! He lost your card, so we knew not where to write, or to whom to send."

"The sum was so trifling," urged Lennard.

"We advertised for you, by description, in Manchester; but never hearing from you, knew not what to do, or what to think, and thus had no opportunity of repaying——"

"Oh, say no more, I beg!" interrupted Lennard, anxious to change the subject; "the Señor Saavedra is with you?"

"Of course I could not travel without him; but he is so—so sick, poor man!"

"Mareamiento——"

"So we call it in Spanish," said she, her eyes becoming brighter and fuller. "Do you know Spanish?"

"Intimately."

"Oh, we shall be quite at home here, and may speak it whenever we tire of English, or wish to say anything absurd. But I fear we shall tire of everything, for we have a long, long voyage—ah, so many thousands and thousands of miles before us! Do you go all the way to Tampico?"

"Not quite; but nearly so far," replied Lennard, while a cloud came over his face. The question brought him back to himself and his wayward fortune, though the speaker was well calculated to lure him away from all but the present, as her eyes, of the

darkest violet blue—eyes that seemed black by night—all light and animation, looked into his, while the masses of fair hair that flowed over her shoulders, in golden ripples, glittered as if powdered with gold-dust. There was, moreover, an indescribable air of youthful bloom, of brightness, piquancy, and freshness, about her appearance and toilet.

“It is a pity that Hesbia could not see her now—the companion I am to have,” thought Lennard, bitterly, and with something of angry triumph in his seared heart.

Born and bred during her earliest years in the sunny south, there were much of heedless joy and careless *abandon* in her air and manner; and when she laughed, she showed such teeth as one sees rarely, so closely set, so small and regular.

Lennard could perceive at a glance that his new Spanish acquaintance was not an “everyday young lady;” her extremely good English puzzled him; but the reason therefore she subsequently explained.

“Had I not been so angry with Señor Saavedra, when in his impatience to be gone he tore my glove—he had not perhaps lost your card; but somehow, Señor, I am for ever in scrapes, involving in them those who are about me too. I always act first and think afterwards.”

“But Donna Dora—”

“What—you know my name?”

"I merely overheard it mentioned by one of the passengers, and could not forget it."

"Why?" she asked, smiling.

"It is so characteristic—so pretty."

"My name is Isidora Dominga. I was so named for mamma, who was a Spanish lady of Tampico; but my papa is an Englishman."

"So—so," thought Lennard; "from England come the pure complexion and innocence of expression; from Spanish America, the glorious eyes and charming *abandon* of manner."

"What are you thinking of, sir?" she asked; "you were about to say something."

"Only that the steward's bell has rung twice for tea in the cabin, and that if no one has a prior right, you will allow me to lead you there."

"Thanks, señor—sir, I mean; no one here has any particular right to me," she said, laughing, "save poor José Saavedra, and he is in bed below."

And thus privileged, Lennard gave her his arm to the other end of the cabin, where the steward and his assistants, towel and salver in hand, were purveying the tea, coffee, &c.

"Eh—aw, what the deuce! if that sulky fellow don't seem to know her, and intimately too—some damned old friend, by Jove!" ejaculated Mr. Jones, of the 5th West India, as he adjusted his glass and surveyed them with an emotion of great inward annoyance.

"No chance of cutting in and winning, to-night

old fellow," said his brother officer, an elderly captain, who had long since learned to prefer a quiet rubber and glass of brandy-and-water to flirtation and cream ices.

In reply to some remark of a Jamaica planter, Captain Trocadero gave a smile and a grunt, which meant to be a cough, while the Yankee supercargo concealed his quid in the deepest recesses of his lantern jaws, and would fain have planted his feet on the tea-table; but the presence of so many "darned strangers" repressed his national love of elaborate ease.

Tea over, a game of chess was somehow proposed, and, at a small marble table apart, the little Donna Dora soon proved herself an expert player, for whom Lennard was no match; but the pretty tiny hands, so white and nimble (though her cheek often rested on one, which became lost amid the masses of her hair), were doubtless much more attractive to his eyes, than the bishops, knights, and rooks; and she kept talking the whole time very gaily, but in a low confidential tone, that was not without its charm.

"And so your papa is an European?" he observed, after a pause.

"Yes—so I have been at schools in Paris and in England," she replied; and then with all the garrulous confidence of girlhood, proceeded to tell him all about herself. "I have relations in Britain somewhere—but where I don't know."

"Could you not discover them?"

"Their addresses and papa's letters were lost in a ship on the way to me. Besides, over the sea in America, we soon lose sight of Europe and all there—it is such a small place. Play your king, please."

"Why, señora?"

"Because you have made a false move."

"And you have friends in Britain?"

"Yes—dear papa has many business friends in Liverpool and elsewhere. I was to have visited them, and, if possible, sought out his relations, but there was not time given me. I am a great pet at home, being the last of several children, for all my little brothers and sisters died of the yellow fever. A sudden illness of papa's is now hurrying us away, and I may never, never again see the country we have left. Not that I care much—it is always so cloudy, and all over England the sun invariably sets in mist."

"So you left hurriedly?"

"Yes; letters were waiting us at Manchester—which place, but for your kindness, we might not have reached so readily."

"I parry your check, señora; you say *we*—have you a party with you?"

"Oh no, only the Señor José Saavedra—he and I."

"And—and he—" stammered Lennard, still watching the pretty hands rather than his chessmen, when the young lady laughed, and threw back her hair with both hands, exclaiming,

"What are you thinking of? How oddly you play? Don't you see that you are touching your men, and without playing them going to *others* quite gravely? That you make false moves, yet never play your king, and don't know when you are checkmated?"

"I beg your pardon—pray excuse me," said Lennard, who indeed was too much abstracted on one hand, and bewildered by the young lady's *espièglerie* on the other, to attend much to a game requiring such deep application as the knightly one of chess.

"And this Señor Saavedra," he resumed.

"What of him?"

"He seems to exercise some control over your movements."

"Control! the old *bobo*! I should think not," said she, laughing; "he is full of the old Spanish—or rather the Morisco-Spanish—idea of keeping women and girls under lock and key, like wine or sweetmeats; and would very possibly faint if he saw me sitting thus with you now."

"Why so?"

"He is my padrino."

"Oh—your god-father!"

"Yes—that is all!"

"I feared that he—he was——"

"What—you surely never thought that he was my—husband?"

"Yes, señora."

She burst into a fit of uncontrollable laughter,

and then said, while tears of fun flashed in her eyes,—

“ Why should you fear it? but I would no more marry him than—than *you* ! ”

From which terrible impossibility Lennard came to the conclusion that she was either betrothed or married — the former, most probably, from her extreme youth—and then thought no more of the matter. He was pleased to reflect that he would have a delightful companion during the long voyage. It proved somewhat longer than any one on board anticipated. However, lest he might labour under any further mistake as to her “ *padrino*,” she informed him that the Señor José Saavedra was an old business friend of her father, who had taken advantage of his return from a visit to Europe, to act as her guardian, escort, or *escudero*, until she reached her own home in Mexico.

This naturally led to a reference to Mexican life and scenery; and when their game was over—and a pretty protracted game it was—so much so, that Ensign Algernon Sidney Jones sought consolation with a soothing weed on deck. As they promenaded the saloon or cabin, she explained to him all that the somewhat garish landscapes, empanelled round it, meant.

There was the great castle of San Juan de Ulloa: she had been in it twenty times! That was the Santiago Fort opposite, with the Vergara Bay, so full of shipping, between; and that was the desolate marsh of Gallego to the north, covered with

mangoes and brushwood. She had seen that volcano, in the background, often spouting red and yellow flames; and her papa had such a pretty country house not far from its base.

Those wild horsemen, with brandished spear, with looped lasso, and levelled musket, scouring across the plain of Toluca, were in pursuit of the herds of horned cattle that fled in clouds of dust before them; and the savage animal, lurking in a corner among the tall, slender sugar-canes and big yellow gourds was a jaguar. That magnificent double row of trees—trees to which those of Europe were as cabbage-stalks—was the Paseo of Mexico. Those men, riding the weary mules, and having such long beards, with their legs and arms in bandages, were invalidos, poor soldiers, returning from war, with the full permission of a generous Republic to beg for the rest of their days. The young girl, whose beauty was so much enhanced by the red umbrella held over her head by an old man, was his wife. He was a ranchero, or farmer, and the demure old dame behind, in black, with a high comb and long cane, was her dueña, and so forth; but in time Lennard began to know all those people and places for himself.

Then pleasantly she bade him adieu for the night, and retired to the ladies' cabin. He remained for a time in the saloon, looking at the pictures they had examined, or it might be, perhaps, that a sense of her presence hovered there. Then he joined the gentlemen who were smoking on

deck, and remembered, suddenly, that during all the past two hours he had spent with the fair stranger—thrown into her society completely, and as people can only be on board of ship—he had never once recalled his past disappointments or his sorrows.

CHAPTER III.

CAPTAIN TROCADERO.

CHANCING to ask, of a promenader on deck, for a light to his cigar, he found himself face to face with the captain, Luke Maynard, a pleasant, lively, and gentlemanly man, with wonderfully little that was nautical in his air or appearance.

"A light—with pleasure, sir," said he, and held forth his cigar.

"Thanks—by the way, captain, who are those Spanish folks you have on board—passengers?"

"I can guess whom you mean—the young lady with the golden hair, and the old gentleman with the huge mustachios."

"Exactly — I have not seen him yet, but I believe he is on board."

"I think you might have found it all out by this time. You were together a good spell, and must have turned it to account," said the captain, drily, and laughing as he thrust his hands deep into the pockets of his reefing-jacket, and turned his back to the night wind. "However, Donna

Dora and Señor José Saavedra are rich folks, hailing from Tampico, or some other port on the Gulf of Mexico."

"Rich, I suppose?"

"Ay, rich as a Jew! This ship cost above one hundred thousand pounds; a better was never built even on the Clyde; her father could build and launch two or three such and never miss the money—at least so says old Trocadero, and he should know all about it, if any one does."

"Wealthy are they? money—always money, as a virtue above all human virtues!" muttered Lennard, as the captain went forward to hail the officer of the watch and give some orders. "Well, with all her charms, and the little Spaniard has money, the events of the last month have rendered *me* proof against her, without that warning. And so the Captain Trocadero knows all about them, does he? Now that I think of it, where have I heard that name before?"

After a few moments' reflection, it flashed upon him, and hurrying to his state-room, he opened his portmanteau and sought for Envoyse's letter of instructions. There it was, packed up with the torn glove—the tiny kid glove—of the Spanish lady, which oddly enough, he had, perhaps inadvertently, stuffed in with his other property, and which he now placed in his pocket-book.

He was requested to make particular inquiries as to the circulation of rumours to the effect that

three large ships belonging to Vere & Co. had been nefariously and feloniously scuttled in South American waters, by a skipper named Trebucio Trocadero, for the alleged purpose of realizing the insurances effected thereon; concerning the failure of a house in Costa Rica and non-payments elsewhere, all of which were stated with singular vagueness; and finally he was to start a branch of the firm of Vere & Co. in Vera Cruz, with two Spanish and two English clerks, or such others as he might find necessary, &c.

"Trebucio Trocadero," said Lennard, involuntarily, as he re-entered the saloon and glanced towards a table at the further end, where the Spaniard was intently perusing a Spanish shipping gazette, and imbibing from time to time some cold brandy-and-water.

He was a short, thick-set, piratical-looking ruffian, of singularly uninviting appearance; in visage swarthy as a negro, beetle-browed, with large frontal bones, a hooked nose, and square, angular jaw. His black hair was becoming grizzled, but was thick as the fur of a bear. He had enormous round shoulders and arms, every muscle and fibre of which had been developed to their utmost tension by tallying on ropes and hard work of all kinds; he had powerful bandy legs and large hands, resembling bunches of knotted rope that had been dipped in tar. An occasional twitching of his thick sensual mouth, and a covert expression of his small fierce eyes,

seemed to indicate much of a cunning, savage, and cowardly nature.

Such was this pleasant Caballo Marino, or regular old seahorse, of whom we shall hear more anon, and who now raised his eyes from his tattered shipping gazette to fix them in stern inquiry on Lennard, who with perfect coolness drew in a chair and seated himself at the opposite side of the table.

"Excuse me, Captain Trocadero," said he in Spanish, that was so pure as to make that personage open his eyes very wide; "permit me, without intrusion, to make your acquaintance."

"Por que, Señor?" was the surly response.

"I have one or two questions to ask with your permission," replied Lennard, still politely.

"On nautical matters?"

"Yes."

"That is well; I don't know much about the land—Dios no quiero!"

"You have been much at sea?"

"Ever since boyhood, when I ran away from Cadiz as a cabin boy on board a slaver."

"You know something of the Straits of Bahama, perhaps?"

"Si, Señor—every island, rock, and key of them, from the great Fresh-water-ponds of Imagua to the Florida Reefs—a matter of two hundred Spanish leagues. Motre de Dios! Many a tearing pampero I've weathered there, and never worse than in the windward passage between Tortuga and Cuba."

"Did you command a ship of five hundred tons that was lost last summer on the Salt Key Bank in the Santarem Channel?"

"No!" replied the other, with knitted brows and flashing eyes.

"Nor another that was lost on the Cayo Verde, south-eastward of the Great Bahama Bank?"

"No—no—I tell you no! Santo de los Santos!" he added, with blasphemous fury, while smiting the table with both his clenched hands, "I never lost a ship in my life!"

"Strange; and your name Trebucio Trocadero?"

"Yes; Trebucio Trocadero—once of Cadiz, and now anywhere to where the sea or Satanas may send him. But, talking of names, what is yours, my fine fellow?"

"I do not answer questions that are asked in such a tone," replied Lennard, haughtily.

"Then keep your name to yourself; but what the devil are you?"

"Administrador—agent for Vere & Co., of Liverpool—as well as partner in the firm."

An expression of surprise and half-incredulity stole over Trocadero's face for a moment, and his manner betrayed hesitation.

"Pho!" said he, after a pause, "I don't care if you were the Governor of all Mexico. Par Dios! Why all these questions? I can only tell you," he added, with a steady glance of mysterious and unutterable ferocity, "that if you don't happen to be lost overboard in the night, I shall have you

ashore for this on the first land we see, and there try which of us is the best man, in any fashion you like, with pistol, knife, or knuckleduster."

"Come, come, gentlemen, what the deuce is up between you," said Captain Maynard, of the *Golden Dream*, who with others had drawn near them unperceived; "remember that I will permit no quarrelling on board my ship. A challenge? It is well the ladies have all retired—a most unseemly row this would have been to them!"

"I merely asked Captain Trocadero two simple questions concerning certain wrecks in the Bahama Straits, and he flew into a fury which leads me to suppose that he knows more than he cares to admit. If I do him wrong," said Lennard, who deemed it prudent for the time to dissemble alike his anger and his suspicions, "it was without intention—if I have unwittingly offended him I shall indeed be sorry."

"You're a good fellow, Mr. Blair," said Captain Maynard; "come shake hands on't, my old Buccanier!"

But Trocadero gave Lennard a withering scowl as he started from the table and turned away; and during the remainder of the voyage, which was a long one, they carefully avoided each other.

"Beware of Trocadero," whispered Captain Maynard; "he's a dangerous kind of fellow, and not likely to be bothered by scruples."

Convinced that there was some mystery in all this anger of the Spaniard, Lennard was about

once more to peruse the letters of Abel Envoyse, when his arm was twitched by Mr. Jaleel Nutmeg the Yankee supercargo.

"Sir-ee," said that personage, who had extracted a plug of tobacco from his mouth, and was airing it on the point of a jack-knife; "I'm gwine to liquor up," he drawled through his nose; "will you jine me in a cocktail?"

"Thanks—I've been nettled a little."

"Worried a bit I can see, by that old Mexican cuss, Trocadero."

"Yes; I was simply endeavouring——"

"To take his soundings; wal—he's a py-ratical old rowdy, if ever there was one. Blow'd if he wouldn't pass for twin brother to Captain Kidd."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes; so beware of him, stranger—beware of him, for he's half bear, half alligator, with a good cross of the cobra; so I'd leave him and his navigation alone."

"You have been listening to our conversation?"

"I rather guess I have—to every word. Now, stranger, what's yer business out there about the Bahama Channel?"

"I have nothing to do with the Bahama Channel."

"You're one o' them critturs as travel to write books?"

"I am not," replied Lennard, curtly.

"How do you make your livelihood—get fixings—your plunder and all that?"

Lennard laughed at the coolness of the American.

"Wal—I don't want to be curious," he resumed; "but come and let us have our cocktail before that darned Britisher swell in the biled rag comes below," for so he termed Ensign Jones, who, as the vessel had been but a short time at sea, showed as yet an unusual amount of shirt-front (the boiled rag in question), with magnificent studs, always dressing carefully for dinner out of deference to the ladies, and to the great disgust of Mr. Jaleel Nutmeg, who appeared in a perpetual state of dishabille and general disorder of collar and hair.

"Ah," he resumed, "for all the show the crittur makes, I guess that captain; or whatever he is, of Queen Victoria's niggers, may be almighty poor; there'll be no pickings or stealings in her service as in that of Uncle Sam, or that of his new friend the Emperor of all the Roosias."

CHAPTER IV.

OF A DREAM THAT WAS NOT GOLDEN.

THE weather was fine, the wind generally fair, and the great ocean steamer went on her voyage prosperously. After Señor José Saavedra came on deck and found his "sea-legs"—which only enabled him to stagger to and fro, and to grasp wildly at ropes, belaying-pins, or any one who chanced to be near him, whenever the vessel rolled or plunged—Lennard had seldom an opportunity of speaking long with Donna Dora Dominga, as the little escudero, muffled in an ample black poncho bordered with red, and having a tasselled cap surmounting his tawny visage and enormous black mustachios, was ever on guard and suspiciously hovering nigh, like a character in a melodrama rather than one of real life.

On one occasion they contrived to exchange their vignettes, for the Donna had an album and was anxious to show her papa a likeness of the gentleman who had come so timely to their aid at Preston; and by effecting this important barter publicly under the Señor's angry eyes, deprived it

of all appearance of subtlety, and really none existed. On an examination of those trifling—but often, according to circumstances, ties, or separation, interesting—little sun-pictures, they found that the resemblance of each to the other in face was alike strange and striking! Yet Lennard was dark-haired and tall—she, fair-haired and petite. There was evidently a world of romance in the heart of this impulsive Spanish girl, so she laughed excessively at the coincidence, though surly Señor José saw no likeness between them whatever.

The passengers were all usually on deck now; even the most inveterate whist-players found no excuse for lingering below; the sun was so bright, the sea so calm, and ever swelling past in long blue glassy rollers; chess, so far as regarded Lennard and the donna, was an interdicted game, now that her watchful padrino—to the regret of the former—had fully emerged from his cell or state-room, where for hours he had lain under the hands of the steward, alternately cursing the sea and imploring our Lady of Guadalupe. The light dresses of the ladies fluttered on the poop, making all seem gay on board; the odour of cigars incessantly floated upward from the maindeck, where the gentlemen generally promenaded, pausing now and anon at the break aft to exchange a few words with the fair passengers who were seated on the poop rails, which they generally preferred to seats between the guns or cushions on the after gratings; and there crochet, tatting, and novels

were the order of the day, till the steward's bell announced a meal, causing them all to rise like a covey of partridges and seek the assistance of the nearest gentleman's hand or arm for the arduous descent of Jacob's ladder—the best staircase in the world to exhibit to advantage a pretty foot and well-turned ankle.

And daily some new wonder of the deep occurred to excite interest or afford conversation; now it was the *sargasso*, the green bunches of Florida Gulf weed, which floated past, shining like gold in the sunlight, or phosphorescent and white under the colder beams of the moon, for then Corvo and Flores, the most western of the Azores, lay distant some twenty leagues or so upon their lee. Then came the catching of the first dolphin, when it was found, to the disappointment of all, that its changing hues were more brilliant and beautiful when *in* the water, than when dying out of it; the silvery flying fish would start from the bosom of one green wave to vanish in the rising slope of another, and ever and anon, no matter how far from land, there were old Mother Cary's chickens in brown flocks, and the stormy petrel so called after St. Peter by the pious mariners of old, hovering perhaps round a piece of drifting wreck that was covered with sea ware and barnacles; and all such little incidents, with hailing an occasional craft that was homeward bound, formed most animated subjects for discussion in their narrow circle, especially for a lady passenger of uncertain age, who wore a false front and blue

spectacles, and who, as she kept a diary, perpetually worried Captain Maynard and his mates as to where the ship was "now;" and so the first week passed on, till the Saturday night came with its fun and fiddling in the forecastle, its dances and songs under the leech of the foresail; music of a more choice nature in the cabin, with the toasts of "sweethearts and wives," and "all ships at sea;" and then Sunday followed, when a church was rigged on the poop, with stools, hassocks, and spare bunting; Jack appeared in his best jacket and ducks, and Kit Kentledge, the boatswain, piped all hands to prayers, while overhead the scarlet union floated out in honour of the day, though there was no eye abroad upon the waste of waters to see it, save One.

The recollection of Trocadero's strange phrase, or half-threat, "*if* you don't fall overboard in the night," occurred from time to time to Lennard's memory, with an unpleasant effect.

The words unmistakably contained a dark hint, that if a feasible opportunity occurred, the captain was quite capable of ridding himself by a most summary process of any one he disliked, or whom he suspected of holding a key to some secret act or generally unknown portion of his nautical career.

When few men were on deck, in a dark night, with the wind blowing hard, and a heavy sea on, this muscular ruffian, at a moment when unseen, by a blow and a hoist over to leeward might easily render Lennard's berth an empty one, and blot out

his existence for ever ; so, knowing this, the young man resolved to avoid him as much as possible, and even was so careful as to bolt his state-room door in the night, because that of Trocadero opened on the opposite side of the saloon.

As for a duel when ashore, he never contemplated such a result ; but, if attacked, was resolved to shoot down Trocadero like a dog, and without mercy.

But so full was he of those suspicions, and the anxious thoughts the daily presence of this truculent Spaniard inspired, that one night he dreamed that the covert threat had been put in execution, and that he had actually been knocked off the taffrail, headlong into the sea by Trocadero !

Gasping for breath, he felt himself rise on the summit of a wave only to see the ship leaving him behind, for he was whirling helplessly in the white eddy of the waves, amid her wake, on which the varied lights of the cabin windows streamed. Above these, over the taffrail, and the stern boat which swung there, he could see the ferocious Trocadero, pale with fury in the moonlight, the veins in his forehead knotted and swollen, his thick lips twitching, his huge hands clenched.

Lennard strove to shriek for aid, but the sound died away upon his powerless tongue.

Why should this man exult in his destruction, or seek for it ? What wrong had he ever done him ? And there now was Donna Dora (how strangely like

Hesbia the violet-eyed and bright-haired Spanish girl looked!). She screamed and held forth her hands to him; but at that moment Trocadero tore her back, while he—the victim—floated away astern into the waste of darkness and of death, for the water seemed to close over him!

Then, with a painfully nervous start, he awoke to find himself snug in his own berth on board the *Golden Dream*, the first beams of the night lamp that swung from a beam struggling for mastery with the fainter rays of early morning that stole through the little round yoke in the side of the vessel, against which the waves at times were surging.

He was in his own berth—true! But what other sounds were those he heard? A hand trying to undo the latch—to unfasten the brass bolt on the door of his little cabin?

“Who is there?” he demanded, and sprung to his feet.

But there was no response; so, arming himself with a boot-jack, he threw open the door, and looked forth just in time to see that of Trocadero’s cabin closing on the opposite side of the saloon, which was almost dark, as only one lamp burned now, of the many that swung from the beams.

Reclosing and fastening his door more carefully than ever, Lennard looked at his watch.

“Morning is at hand; so—so—I have now had a double warning, and more than ever shall I closely watch that scoundrel Trocadero!”

The result of his watching was, that the mystery concerning the Spaniard greatly increased.

Next day, betimes, and before any of the other passengers were up, he found himself face to face with Captain Trocadero on the poop, where however they took opposite sides, the Spaniard keeping to windward when he proceeded to make up a cigarito and to light it, heedless or unwitting that his smallest action was watched by Lennard Blair.

Having made full arrangements for his morning whiff, he crumpled up and tossed away the remainder of the paper in which he had rolled the tobacco, and went forward among the morning watch, as he generally preferred the society of the forecabin to that of the cabin.

The fragment of paper did not, as he supposed, fly to leeward; but fell at the feet of Lennard, who at once took it up, not caring whether the man at the wheel observed him; and on inspection found it to be the upper portion of a letter—a letter to Trocadero—and in the handwriting of Mr. Vere!

“Vere in correspondence with this man—the very rascal accused of scuttling his ships, and concerning whom I am to make inquiries?” thought Lennard; “what can all this mean?”

So this man had actually been in Liverpool and in direct communication with Mr. Vere, as this torn missive proved, for it was dated from London, and only two days before the sailing of the *Golden Dream*!

It was simply the commencement of a letter, the

contents of which it would be vain to conjecture ; but Lennard had now many painful misgivings, which he sought fruitlessly to soothe or analyze ; while he carefully consigned the fragment to the inner recesses of his pocket-book, the result of a mere business habit, perhaps, which he had acquired in the service of Vere & Co.

CHAPTER V.

EN VOYAGE.

NOW Donna Dominga came on deck, alone and the first of all the ladies ; so he hastened to offer her his arm, and to lead her to a seat improvised for her, with cushions on the deck gratings aft, where he wrapped her shawl around her.

The morning was a lovely one ; sea and sky alike so blue and so bright that save for a speck or two at the horizon, the eye failed to detect where water ended and the thin faint clouds began, while through the ambient air, the dark smoke of the funnels could be traced for more than twenty miles astern over the water which the ship had traversed in the dark.

"Ah—buenos dias de Dios á vuestra Donna Dora," had been Lennard's first greeting when she came on deck, as he lifted his hat at the risk of its going hopelessly over to leeward.

"Good morning, sir," she replied, laughing ; "but pray speak English, for, a little time and I shall hear nothing but Spanish—yet why do I say so, when I love my native language so dearly?"

she added, while shaking out the skirts of her pretty and becoming dress (but all her dresses seemed pretty and most becoming), and seating herself somehow as to show more than usual of her handsome ankles cased in tight white stockings, her little feet and tiny kid boots. "English, papa says, is the language properly of commerce."

"And so in English I shall hope to make my fortune—money; but in Spanish——"

"Bueno! what will you make in Spanish?"

"Love," said Lennard, colouring, as he gallantly lifted his wide-awake.

"Then don't let us talk Spanish by any means," said she, with fun lurking in the corner of her eyes.

"A little flirt, I fear," thought Lennard, as she sat very demurely fanning herself, though the morning air was quite cool, yet pleasant. Soured by the memory of Hesbia, he deemed himself proof against the charms of the fair Spaniard, and even *almost* mockingly made love to her till—till there came a time when he found that the game was growing too perilous, for she was altogether unlike any other young lady he had met; she was so full of piquant girlish spirit and beauty, with the softness, the dimples, and the purity of a child, and yet in coolness and determination would act like a woman of years and experience if occasion required.

With all her knowledge of her own great beauty, the Spanish girl could see that the respectful,

though admiring glance of the grave, almost sad-eyed Lennard Blair, was very different from the cool inspection, the dilettante curiosity of Ensign Jones, of little M. Fabien the French Chevalier, of Mr. Nutmeg, and others who passed her on the poop, and who sought to establish with her that which may be termed an acquaintanceship of the eye.

Lennard, on his part, now found himself looking for her the first in the morning, and watching her till the hour of retiring, when he would walk for hours on that side of the deck where she lay, a piece of attention with which she would willingly have dispensed, even had she known who the assiduous promenader was.

"Why does the face of this girl haunt me?" he began to ask himself; "she is a total stranger, yet she fills my mind with strange impressions of previous acquaintance with, or knowledge of her—a fancy that we must have met long before that momentary meeting at Preston; and so her face grows on me, as if foreshadowing that it might become a good or evil star in time to come. . . . What! mooning again, Lennard! Pshaw!"

But that bright little face, with its beautiful eyes—and truly "haunting eyes" they were—came between him and the blue sea when he gazed dreamily at the far horizon; it came out of the darkness of his cot at night; it mingled with that ugly dream of Trebucio Trocadero, and would not be thrust aside, though the fact of its being in his mind's

eye was, he believed, a species of treason to one who had rejected and cruelly trifled with him.

"Let me not think thus," he would say to himself; "let me not give way to this new fancy, which may so soon ripen and expand in the narrow compass of a voyage; for what will be the purpose, the use, or the fate of that fancy when the voyage is over, and the hour of separation comes?"

Though Donna Dora was fond of having a circle around her on deck, or when at the piano in the after-cabin (especially when her old Mentor was near), she generally preferred the society of Lennard, whose knowledge of her native language was a great bond between them; thus some of the Spanish gentlemen of colour scowled at him very undisguisedly, forgetting for the time, perhaps, that the fact of their being half-bloods, quadroons, or even octoroons, rendered them ineligible society for her, according to etiquette in some of the native provinces. Ensign Jones and his brother officers were unpleasantly dry to him; the Yankee supercargo voted him a "darned unsociable spoon," and the officers of the ship, as the youths in brass buttons and semi-naval caps designated themselves, quizzed them both, and averring that "they mortally hated *him*," indulged in various speculations and schemes by which to put some ridiculous affront upon him before they were under the Tropic of Cancer. Then there were times when Señor José Saavedra took her to task, saying—

"Has it never occurred to you, Señora, that this

young man, of whom we know nothing, is not a proper companion for you?"

"I hope he is not an improper companion, Padrino mio," she would reply, with a smiling but reddened face; so that ere long the piquancy of secret intelligence, the most dangerous element of all, began to steal into their intimacy.

Lennard's knowledge of the Spanish language formed, we have said, a peculiar link between him and the young Donna; but somehow it came to pass that they always lapsed into more prosaic English, when her father's confidential friend old Señor Saavedra, who knew it *not*, drew near or joined them.

Why was this?

Their eloquent eyes might have given an answer; but as yet no serious conversation had taken place between them, and there were some features in Lennard's bearing which seemed to pique the curiosity and excite the imagination of Donna Dora.

Why, thought she, was this young man so reserved and grave, so sweet and sad in eye and manner at times;—so obstinate and cynical at others—to men especially? What had happened to him? What had cast a shadow on his life already—what but love, of course? Poor fellow—and he looked so handsome and drew long sighs so interestingly when he thought no one observed him! Yet, but for the romance of her nature this interesting youth might only be worried by the

toothache, as Señor José once ventured to suggest, to the great disgust of Donna Dora.

There was, she averred to the ladies, when in their own cabin they nightly discussed the merits of their brother voyagers—a dreamy expression in his eyes quite calculated to interest, and they agreed with her, some suggesting that he was an author probably, or an artist, a musician—“or a lunatic,” added the fair diarist who wore the false front and blue goggles. But Dora felt herself irresistibly attracted, she scarcely knew why or how.

And how was it with Lennard? Why did he feel an unusual interest in this girl? She was beautiful certainly, sparkling, and so forth; but was he “about to fall in love again,” he asked himself; “to become as great an ass as before?” No—he hoped not! It was only propinquity, which, like opportunity, is so often the devil’s game—his loneliness in the world—the steamer, &c.

Surely he had enough to think of—his late sorrow—the mystery of Vere and Trocadero—his future prospects in a strange land; and so he blushed for himself and shrunk with dismay from the fear that he was about to feel, or had already felt, an interest too tender in Donna Dora, and from that moment resolved to act like a Stoic, and surpass Zeno himself; but alas! for his rivalry with him of Citium, for when Señor José retired to bed early that night, growling with a fit of lumbago, and when the Donna came on deck as the moon

rose to shed a splendour on the glassy sea, and when she expressed a wish to peep into the engine-room and see the mysteries thereof, the hand and arm of Lennard Blair were the first proffered to assist her down Jacob's ladder, and to lead her forward along the deck.

CHAPTER VI.

CONCERNING THE STARS AND A CERTAIN TORN
GLOVE.

THEY were now almost in tropical regions, and the night was one of fully tropical loveliness. The great steamer was gliding through the water at her utmost speed, with everything on her that would draw, even to a main-royal, for she was shiprigged, and went easily through the water, the revolution of her enormous paddle-wheels producing little more than a monotonous hum.

The breeze was soft and steady; her towering shadow went far away to leeward, out upon the moonlit sea, and even the smoke of her funnels was reflected there as in a mirror. Immediately below the counter on either quarter the water was dark as ink, and each time she gave a kind of plunge when cleaving the long rollers in succession, the bights of her wake met together astern in double eddies that were full of phosphorescent and silvery light. The sky was full of stars, and all of a wondrous bright blue; but though beautiful the

night, there were very few passengers on the poop, where the fifth mate, who had the watch, with his hands thrust into the side-pockets of his reefing-jacket, trod to and fro, giving, from time to time, a look aloft, another to windward, a third at the binnacle, and anon, a fourth over the quarter, as if he expected something novel to appear in that direction.

The men of the second-dog watch (which extends from six to eight p.m.) were gathered in a knot forward, spinning yarns, jesting, and now and then breaking forth into songs and choruses; and once the clear mellow voice of Kit Kentledge, the boat-swain, who was a great favourite with the crew, rang out upon the night, as he sang an old Buccaneer ditty:

“ Oh sweet it was in Avis,
To catch the landward breeze,
A’swing, with good tobacco,
In a hammock ’neath the trees,
With a coal-black lass to fan you,
Whilst you listened to the roar
Of breakers on the bar outside,
That never reached the shore.”

“ Bueno—how pretty !” exclaimed Dora, pausing near the long-boat which was on its chocks over the main-hatch and well lashed to ring-bolts in the deck amid-ships. She listened with her hand uplifted, as if she would hush even the stillness while the seaman sung.

Ruffled and wafted out by the wind, her golden

hair seemed of greater volume than usual, as her shawl fell from her head over her shoulders ; and in the moonlight there was a wonderful whiteness in her uplifted hand, that reminded Lennard of the white rose-leaf, just as her cheek did of the pink of a great shell when it blends so softly with the hue of snow—if snow can be said to have a hue.

As they were peeping through the grating of the open hatchway into the engine-room, where the mighty powers of locomotion were in full play and in all their bravery of polished steel and brass, and shining in the fiery glow that streamed occasionally through the jaws of the furnace ; while grimy men went to and fro upon the iron floor below, Lennard looked upon the bright and intelligent face of the young girl who clung to his arm, he felt the pressure of the little hand which closed upon it—as if the vastness, the power, the tremendous clanking and the general air of mystery down there appalled her, and while the touch of her hand sent a thrill to his heart some strange and tumultuous thoughts occurred to him.

“ She is beautiful and winning, but she is rich, while I, in circumstances, am narrower than ever. A woman played with my heart and trifled cruelly with it ; why then should I shrink from trifling with this girl ? ” So was he wont to think in his cynical moments : but *now*—and intimacies ripen soon under the same roof, sooner still on board of ship—in such a time as this, under the happy smile of the bright little Spaniard, such bitter communings

were forgotten or thrust aside as coarse and ungenerous.

Was it that he had acquired the habit of loving something, and that there was a void in his heart requiring to be filled? Was it that some absurd thought of avenging himself on the sex lured him into loving now; and if so, why make this young girl the victim? She had more heart and was full of deeper thought than Hesbia Vere. Lennard Blair could remember that *her* conversation had been chiefly of people, gaiety, racing meets and hunts and balls, the change of fashions and of dress; with seldom a remark about the past or the future. Hesbia lived for the present alone, and in that spirit had dismissed him from her heart; and now the memory of all she had made him endure prompted him to give full scope to his admiration—shall we say his growing passion—for the young Spanish girl.

Hesbia Vere had cast him off for ever, and all their ties were broken now, so surely as the deep blue water rolled between them.

From the formidable but somewhat prosaic mysteries of the engine-room Donna Dora turned her face to the stars which shone brightly overhead, spangling the entire sky from the horizon to the zenith, in some places clustering in constellations which exceeded all we ever see of brilliance in Europe; and new planets seemed to flash out all the more brightly when viewed through the dark squares of the rattlins, from amid the streaming

smoke of the funnels, or when seen by glimpses under the arched leech of a swelling sail.

"How glorious they are—how gloriously beautiful," she exclaimed, looking up, while her eyes beamed with enthusiasm, and her lips seemed to quiver, for she had a finely cut and sensitive-looking little mouth, not unlike Lennard's own; and hence perhaps the resemblance in their photographs.

"Beware of cold—I would not for worlds that you caught one," said Lennard, in a low and earnest voice, while looking into her eyes and drawing her shawl again over her head, he confined the soft tresses within it, and with her brooch fastened it under her chin. He felt her cheek touch his fingers during this process, and more than once her hands met his; and finally he drew an arm through his own and gently pressed it there, as if to reassure her and guide her steps, as he led her to the ship's side, where they could see the stars and the ocean, with all its waves careering fast astern.

Lennard Blair knew right well that there is a scale in the order of familiarity, and that much may be said or done without offence being taken or reprehension given; but he trembled already to avail himself of the present pleasing situation, and somewhat nervously he began to talk about the stars while thinking only of Dora's eyes.

"Never in Europe—certainly not in England—did you ever, Señora, see Orion's belt shine thus, or the Serpent flash so brightly about his foot."

"And I do so love to see the steersman look at the stars, as that man at the wheel is doing now. It seems to me that he trusts to them quite as much as to his compass when guiding us over this mighty waste of trackless water—guiding us so unerringly to our home."

"To your home in the sunny south, Donna Dora; mine lies far away—if indeed I have a home in the world."

She looked at him earnestly for a moment, and then resumed the current of her own thoughts.

"To me the skill seems wonderful that teaches our timonero—our helmsman—to steer by night, 'to read'—says some author—'the vast book ever open above us, which we call the heavens, and on whose azure leaf God has written with letters of diamond.'"

Then passing at once from grave to gay, she began to hum and half sing,—

"Señora ! estrella luciente," &c.

As she sang dreamily thus, her eyes chanced to meet those of Lennard regarding her fixedly, tenderly, and with an expression that made her pause. It was a mournful glance, in which anger and scrutiny seemed strangely to mingle, for many thoughts were at that moment conflicting in his heart.

"You look sad, Mr. Blair," said she; "you have some secret sorrow, I am sure."

"Perhaps."

"All the ladies on board say that you have!"

"They watch me then?" said he, smiling.

"Of course we do," was the naïve reply; "you regret leaving home; is it the *mal du pays*?"

"No; I have no such regret now."

"Why, señor?"

"I have no home to leave," was the cynical response.

"Friends then?"

"I have none—they are all dead."

"Then you sorrow for some one who loved you?" persisted the pretty querist.

"I do not—sorrow is past."

"For some one you love then—I must discover your secret."

His lip curled slightly—quivered perhaps, but he only sighed and looked away.

"Of what are you thinking, señor?"

"The beauty of—of—the sea to-night."

"Is that all?"

"Yes, señora!"

There was another pause, after which Donna Dora found that she must again take the initiative or the conversation might languish.

"How quiet—almost taciturn you have become! If you have a secret grief, I am so sorry for having jested about it, or hinted of it, so pray pardon me. Or," she added, laughing, "is it only that which the French so happily term *la solidité des Anglais*, that affects your manner?"

"Perhaps — but I don't happen to be an Anglais."

"Are you a North American?" she asked, abruptly.

"No, señora."

"What then?"

"I happen to be a Scotsman—Escoto."

"En verdad! But you are not dressed in the same fashion of the Scots I saw represented in Lucia di Lammermuir at Paris?"

"I should think not, and hope never to be," replied Lennard, laughing, as he thought of the silk tights and general absurdity of the operatic costume she referred to.

"Escozia," she repeated, thoughtfully; "I have read all Scott's novels about that country; and I have heard papa speak of it—he was certainly there in his youth."

"Oh, very likely! all the world seem to go there once a year now."

"But what makes you usually so thoughtful?"

"An idea."

"And this idea—I must know it?" said she, laughing.

"Why are women so fickle?"

"Because men are so strange, perhaps; but I make a wrong admission, and must deny your premises."

"Are they not sometimes false?"

"You are actually bitter, señor! But men are so seldom true."

"I could be true as steel—true as time, or as the sun itself to—to one who loved me!"

"Heavens!" said she, laughing louder, "you are quite carried away; señor, do please to preserve your senses."

Lennard had begun impetuously; but, suddenly changing his tactics, he opened his pocket-book, and said, while producing the torn relic of their casual meeting, which, by a fortuitous chance, had been preserved among his papers:

"See how I have kept this glove—you remember it?"

She flushed scarlet, and Lennard coloured too; for the rogue felt that he was rather acting a part.

"I was very angry then," said Dora, growing pale again. "Ah, what must you have thought of me! But how did you come to preserve such a thing as this—you never could have hoped to meet *me* again?"

"Another, by a happy chance, preserved it for me," he replied, somewhat unwilling to play a card so false, though the young girl—who quite recognized her glove—seemed both puzzled and gratified.

Her left arm was pressed within his, and against his heart. He was actually stealing her left hand within his own, and he was looking alternately into the shrinking soft dark eyes, and at the parted cherry lips.

A new love was filling fast his heart. The

memory of the old, ill-fated one was gone, and that beating heart seemed flying to his head!

An avowal of esteem, of deep interest, of love, or of some kind, was trembling on his lips, when it was arrested by the appearance of a huge dark visage, which appeared above the gunnel of the long-boat close by, and by a sound between a cough and a laugh that came most gratingly on their ears, as Captain Trocadero, who had been sleeping, or more probably lurking and watching them, suddenly upreared his squat figure from amid the lumber which usually fills a long-boat on deck, and leisurely proceeded to clamber out.

With a gesture of impatience Donna Dora snatched the torn glove from Lennard's hand, and tossed it away to leeward, saying,—

“Oh, señor, how could you think of preserving such a trashy relic as an old glove? It is too absurd!”

As he led her back to the gaily-lighted saloon, Lennard scowled at the Spanish skipper and thought—while his strange dream of the other night came vividly to memory—

“Disgusting devil! but for him—well, there is a glorious opportunity gone for ever!”

CHAPTER VII.

THE PADRINO TAKES LENNARD TO TASK.

THE watchful Señor José Saavedra was now daily on deck again, or in the saloon cabin, quietly observant of his charge; so Lennard found the difficulty—almost the impossibility—of reverting to their last conversation or bringing it back to the point so nearly gained, and lost through the sudden apparition of the truculent Trocadero, who now ventured occasionally to address the Donna in Spanish, and sought to draw her into conversation; but she always shrunk from him with unmistakeable dislike and hauteur, for the man's aspect was singularly repulsive.

She could not fail to be pleased with the attentions of Lennard Blair; he was decidedly a handsome fellow, engaging in manner, and modest and unassuming in bearing. She felt intuitively that the admiration which fettered him to her side, that made him hover near her, despite the chilling presence of old Saavedra, ever ready and prompt to proffer those little attentions a lady requires so

incessantly on board of ship, was fast ripening into an emotion very tender indeed.

Lennard perhaps had no serious ultimate intentions, for he had no hope, and late events had shaken his faith severely. Donna Dora, he knew from Captain Maynard, was reputed to be enormously wealthy—in fact, one of the richest heiresses in Spanish America, and the old Hidalgo Dominga, whoever he was, would no doubt look at any stranger who addressed his daughter in the light of a presumptuous fortune-hunter.

Loving her would be a pleasant delusion, which would end with the voyage. There might be a pang at the parting, an honest, heartfelt regret—and then he would set to work with a will in the elucidation of the Mexican affairs of Vere & Co., and the mysteries of their correspondence with the Captain Trocadero.

Strong head winds had latterly checked the speed of the *Golden Dream*, but about the morning of the twentieth day, as he sat at breakfast in the great saloon pleasantly chatting to Donna Dora and her Padrino, the cry of "land ahead" gave him the very pang he dreaded or anticipated, and his eyes met those of the Donna, as he gave her his hand, when with all the other passengers they hurried on deck.

The steamer was now fairly in the tropics; over the poop was spread a graceful awning of white canvas fringed with scarlet. Beneath this, the deck for coolness was well soused with salt water

and carefully swabbed every morning, under the special eye of Mr. Kentledge, and now the sun was exhaling a steam from the deck, together with a strong odour of wood and pitch—an odour given in such warm latitudes alone.

At the far horizon away to the south-west, amid the white haze that floated on the morning sea, the dark outline of the land, consisting of several ranges of mountains curving upward till they culminated in one great peak, appeared like a streak of floating cloud, for their bases were shrouded in thin mist, which gradually rose skyward and passed away altogether.

"That is Hispaniola, ladies," said Captain Maynard, as he handed his telescope to the mature literary maiden with the blue spectacles.

"Hayti—or San Domingo?" said she, to show her erudition.

"It's all one which you call it, ma'am. Yonder low streak just above the starboard cat-head is the Island of Tortuga or tortoises; and the headland higher still is the mole of St. Nicholas. We shall haul up due south for the bay directly."

"And that mountain peak?" asked Dora.

"Cibao—it rises in the very centre of the island; and it is in the rocks of Cibao that the gold-mines lie."

Many vessels of various nations and of varied rig, polaccas and schooners, ships and steamers, and nearly all with their colours flying,—the red and yellow of Castile and Leon, the tricolour of France,

the stars and stripes of Brother Jonathan, and the garish union of Britain with its absurd conglomeration of crosses, were now in sight, standing to or from the windward passage between Cuba and Hispaniola.

Under steam and canvas the vessel crept fast inshore; the mountain ridges attained greater altitude, their valleys afforded glimpses of the vast plain of La Vega Real, with all its fertility; then farms, sugar and coffee mills came in sight, and luxuriant plantations of cocoa and indigo; and ere long the city of Port-au-Prince, with its harbour full of shipping, the palace built by the black emperor, Faustus I., the Senate House, and the spires of the churches rising white against the background of verdant green, could be distinctly discerned, while much bustle ensued on board the *Golden Dream*. One officer was busy with a gang in getting the anchors over the bows, and the ground tackle rove; another in preparing the donkey engine for hoisting out the cargo, while a third made several clearances on deck prior to starting the hatches when the order was given to "break bulk." Amid all this, little M. Fabien, accoutred in a suit of black with the red ribbon at his buttonhole, was collecting his baggage and paying his adieux assiduously to all—the ladies in particular—for Hayti was to be the scene of his diplomatic labours—his exile from the joys of Paris.

Left almost to themselves amid the general bustle and pre-occupation of all, Lennard remained

by the side of Donna Dora, and gazed upon her from time to time with growing interest. She was apparently wholly intent on observing the features of the coast through her lorgnette, and, like himself, was unaware that two persons were closely watching them.

These were the Señor José and Captain Trocadero, both of whom had a great mistrust of Lennard, but from different motives. The former disliked his systematic attentions to his ward; the latter dreaded that Lennard possessed a clue to some dangerous secret in his past life, and meant to use it against him.

Lennard heeded neither them nor the picturesque shore; he was intently occupied by his fair companion.

"Her manner has betrayed what she—herself—begins to feel—that I am not indifferent to her," he said, mentally; "alas—I never thought to love again!—and this dear little Dora is in some things still a child—but a child with a spirit of her own. What if her Padrino should land with her here, to get rid of me perhaps? Then I should never see her more; yet the captain spoke of her home being near Tampico."

This sudden doubt or supposition caused him some agitation, and he half dreaded to question either her or Saavedra, lest the answer might be in the affirmative; and he sighed almost bitterly at the fear that he might have but a few hours more of her charming society, and that if not at Port-au-

Prince, at the next island they might be separated finally.

Was all this pleasant daily intercourse, were those rambles round the ship in the starlight, the music in the cabin at night, the bright smiling greetings on the poop in the sunny mornings, their interchange of thoughts, of jests and kindness, their glances so full of tender and merry meaning, and more than all, of thoughts unspoken, to go for nothing now, and to be but as a forgotten folly, perhaps on the morrow, when the *Golden Dream* might be ploughing through the Carribean Sea, and he would be standing on her deck alone—the subject perchance of many a jest by the vacant Jones and others who had envied him.

“You go on with the steamer to the Rio Tampico, I believe?” said he, after a long pause.

“Not quite so far,” she replied, and then added with precipitation, “but you don’t land here?”

“No.”

“Nor at Kingston—I hope?”

This “hope” made Lennard’s heart beat quicker, and he said,

“No, Donna Dora; I go to within two hundred and fifty miles of the Tampico river.”

“Then you must be going to La Vera Cruz!” she exclaimed, with unconcealed pleasure dancing in her eyes.

“Yes—that is my destination.”

“How strange—how delightful! I live in Vera Cruz, or not far from it.”

"You, señora?"

"Yes—I shall live there with my papa, of course. But you, señor—what are you about to do in Vera Cruz?"

"Donna Dora," said he, smiling at the girlish abruptness of her question; "I go there to better my fortune. I have a hope, a desire, a project to return to my own country a rich man, or return no more. But desires like mine are seldom fulfilled, and such hopes are often blighted. We hear of the few who succeed in the race for riches; but never of the many who fail and perish by the wayside."

"Do not speak so sadly. Papa is very powerful in many ways; and as an Englishman himself—though quite a Spaniard in habits, tastes, and ideas—he may be well inclined to aid and serve you. And be assured that all—that—that is in my power——"

She paused and coloured deeply, drooping her eyelashes as if she was already saying, or perhaps thinking, too much, and admitting too great an interest in this casual fellow-voyager. She then gave a timid but smiling glance upward; and, as their eyes met, there was a world of secret intelligence conveyed by that swift and fleeting glance.

"Donna Dora," said Lennard, perceiving that they were almost alone, and as he thought unnoticed, "if the emotions of a heart that—that," he continued, in a voice that became tremulous and

soft. What he was about to say, it might be unsafe, perhaps, to speculate upon; but unfortunately he got no further, for at that moment Señor Saavedra came abruptly forward; and while begging a light for his cigar, by an inclination of his head and dark expressive eyes drew Lennard aft to the taffrail. There, stroking his huge mustachios and bustling himself out in his poncho, which he wore as a defence alike against heat and cold, he proceeded to ask Lennard a few questions, with intense gravity of manner, in the Spanish language, his English being hopelessly unintelligible; and it only came on him after dinner, or supper, when he added champagne to his sangaree and curaçoa punch.

"Señor, you will pardon my curiosity; but you go further with us than Hispaniola, I perceive?"

"Yes; I do not land here, at all events."

"Do you cross the Gulf?"

"Si, señor; I go to Vera Cruz."

"Diabolico! Do you say so?"

"Why, señor, what possible interest can you have in my movements? What can it matter to you where I go, or where I do not go?"

"Pardon me—a little further this way—I would crave the favour of a word or two apart."

"I am at your service, señor," said Lennard, bowing.

"Hark you, Señor Lennard—for such I believe

is your name—you are, I think, nay, I am sure,” he continued, bowing low, but haughtily, “a gentleman (*gentil-hombre*), a caballero?”

“I hope so. I have never done aught to forfeit the name,” replied Lennard, who began to think that a duel with revolvers or bowie-knives was in prospect.

“Then permit me to ask, if it is right in you, as a mere pastime—for it can be nothing else—to compromise a young lady of good position, by assiduous and intrusive attentions?”

“What, and whom do you mean?” asked Lennard, haughtily.

“Who could I mean,” continued the little man, whose black eyes shot fire; “but my *alsijada* (god-child), the Donna Dora?”

“Stay, sir, I have no wish to offend or to quarrel with one so much my superior in years, and perhaps in position. I have done nothing beyond the bounds of simple politeness, and if honoured by her friendship——”

“*Bagatela!* do you take me for a fool—a very ass, señor? By friendship for a girl like her, you mean—love!”

“Well, and what then, señor?” asked Lennard, who disliked intensely the loud tone and towering bearing of the little Spaniard.

“I ask you, señor, is it just, honest, or honourable in you, of whom we and she know nothing, to take advantage of the many chances afforded by a sea-voyage——”

"Chances—advantage?" interrupted Lennard, angrily.

"Yes, is it honourable, I repeat, in you to compromise her, as you seem determined to do? Excuse my making these remarks; but your English freedom of manner suits neither New or Old Spain, and I have the honour to be a native of the latter."

"And consequently possess some very narrow prejudices, perhaps?" said Lennard, greatly provoked at being thus lectured and taken to task.

"What you term prejudice, I, señor, deem prudence. Her father, who is my best and oldest friend, intrusted the care of her homeward journey to me. He will demand a strict account of my stewardship — thus I stand here to-day in his place."

Lennard bowed. The Spaniard had resumed his politeness of tone, and thus disarmed the young man, who felt that the questioner had right on his side; but not knowing what to say, Lennard could only give a sigh of impatience.

"Pardon me one question," said Saavedra; "are you a mercantile man?"

"Yes, señor."

"I hope you are a wealthy one?"

"Far from it; and I may be very poor ere long. I know not what is before me," added Lennard, as he thought of Sir Cullender Crowdy, his doubts of Mr. Vere and his desire to leave their interests altogether.

"Your admission is honest, and I like you

the better for it," said Señor Saavedra, patting Lennard on the shoulder. "Donna Dora's family are immensely rich—none are more so in all Mexico perhaps; so in seeking to protect her, I am, perhaps, but saving you from yourself. Beware of this trifling—this pursuit of a bubble, for in the land to which we are going, the land of fire and fever, of bullion-mines, of earthquakes, and tidal waves—a land where the bullet and dagger take the place of sober laws—a land totally unlike the Europe we have left, we have means—very unpleasant *means*, by which at times we rid ourselves of those who mar our plans or cross our paths."

And with these ominous words, which contained a most unmistakeable threat, Saavedra turned away, and as a still more unpleasant sequel to such a conversation, joined Captain Trocadero.

CHAPTER VIII.

OFF THE BAYE DE BARADERES.

THE very palpable threat of that little spitfire, Señor José Saavedra, inspired Lennard with just anger rather than alarm. But after a conversation so marked in its character and so unpleasant in its context, he did not feel himself quite at liberty to improve his already delightful acquaintance with Donna Dora, and still less to urge any useless suit, though there is nothing so suggestive of the tender passion as propinquity, and daily almost constant association with a pretty girl.

Studiously he saw as little of her as possible during the three days which the *Golden Dream* lay at Port-au-Prince, coaling, taking in goods and passengers, chiefly coloured folks in the steerage for Kingston; but still some of the warnings uttered by Saavedra rankled bitterly in his mind.

“Riches, wealth—these words again—here, even

here!" thought he; and in his hatred of the terms, he felt for a time a radical—a republican, and almost as one of those who view in every man who possesses fairer prospects or a larger purse—an enemy! And he loathed those worshippers of the golden calf he was himself in search of—the vulgar and overweening aristocracy of wealth.

Then there was the threat of what *might* be done against him in a land so lawless; and with the threat he remembered the immediate and ominous turning of the Señor to Trebucio Trocadero, a man of whose secret character he had the worst suspicions!

And he was totally destitute of arms, without even the inevitable revolver and bowie-knife with which all wanderers provide themselves for vague contingencies in those regions of revolution and disorder—of rows and recklessness of human life—lands where the worst and most fiery passions of Europe are heated to excess by a tropical climate and by association and intermarriage with the savage.

A revolver pistol bearing his name had once been in his possession, but that now had gone, with all his other baggage, to assist in outfitting Mr. Travice Cheatwood for the tropics.

The fifth morning after the peculiar conversation saw the *Golden Dream* running through the channel of La Gonave, with a light breeze aft, full steam up, and a bright sunshine gilding all the rippling

sea around her. Donna Dora was on deck under the poop awning with a fan and parasol, and looked with something of pique and surprise at Lennard, who after a simple and studiously modest salutation, had gone forward to smoke with the Yankee supercargo and others, leaving her entirely to the flattering attentions of Ensign Jones and one or two others, young doctors and planters, who were resolving to make the most of the thirty-six hours' run or so, which would bring them to their destination.

The water was intensely blue; the waves rose and fell in golden light, with tiny specks of foam upon their tops; the ship's wake astern could be traced for miles like a path upon the water. The sun streamed brightly upon the long stretch of deck, and all the ship was instinct with life, for again the cocks and hens were clucking in the replenished coops, where the steward was searching for new-laid eggs, and several investments made by the ladies, in the shape of tiny paroquets, were swung in cages from the lower rigging.

Greatly to the disgust of those gentlemen who hovered near her, Donna Dora seemed disposed to absorb in conversation the boatswain, Mr. Kit Kentledge, who on this morning was occupied in preparing a new dog-vane, made of feathers and bunting, for the use of the officer of the watch by night; and she persisted in asking him questions concerning the coast and its features, and

his replies always savoured sufficiently of salt water.

"And that opening in the land, dear Mr. Kentledge, just now; do you see it?" she inquired.

"You means the bight, just by the weather-brace of the foresail, mam?"

"Yes; just over there," said she, pointing with her parasol in the direction indicated.

"That is the Baye de Baraderes, that is, mam, in the eastmost pint of Hispaniola; and just where the sea is abreaking over that rock, and where the blue sharks are always found thickest, there's lying in twenty fathom water a privateer brig, as was ballasted with silver dollars and gold doubloons took from the Jack Spaniards in the old war; but she capsized and went down with all hands aboard 'cept the captain's bulldog. He had a caul, if you knows what that is, mam, as a charm aboard agin danger, and also three horse-shoes nailed on his stern; but they warnt no use, for he had his warning o' what was to come."

"A warning; in what way?"

"When a thousand knots off the land, a full-grown rook, as black as the cook's face or a parson's coat, lighted on the jib-boom end! Now if that warnt a sign o' something ugly about to happen to that ere craft I'm a Dutchman!"

"And what happened?"

"The rook sat there in defiance of all the shots the crew fired at it, croaking and flapping his

wings till a fear came over them, and for days and nights the brig went through the water like a hot knife through butter, till she was off yonder rock, when, as I said, she capsized in a squall, and went down trucks foremost. Nothing has ever been seen of her since, 'cepting some of the yellow doubloons which are washed up in the Baye of Baraderes, and they are always as black as the barnacles on the ship's bottom, saving your presence, mam."

"That will do, Kentledge," said Captain Maynard, laughing; "ship your dog-vane, and get some of those new sails bent on forward while the weather is fine, for I have fears it may not be long so."

The boatswain touched his hat and went forward. Mr. Kentledge did not affect the dandyism of the mates. In lieu of their semi-uniform with brass buttons, he exhibited a great amount of check-shirt; a pair of trousers tight at the waist and loose about the ankles; a well-varnished hat in wet weather; a straw one in fine, with a long blue ribbon floating from it, and always perched on the back of his head. Round his brawny throat was a black silk neckerchief, knotted in a style on which he rather prided himself. He had a handsome but sunburnt and weatherbeaten face; a pair of merry blue eyes and set of strong white teeth. He had a rolling gait, a wide step, large brown hands, ever ready apparently to grasp and tally on to something. He seemed about five-and-forty years old,

and displayed a wealth of that rich curly hair and whisker peculiar to most of those who "go down to the sea in ships and do business in great waters."

Trocadero also looked every inch a seaman; but of the bulldog and ruffianly type—the pirate, the slaver, and the Coolie crimp.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PAMPERO.

ISLET à Pierre Joseph, the most western point of beautiful Hispaniola, was sinking like a purple cloudlet into the blue water far astern, when certain rapid atmospheric changes began to arrest the attention and excite the anxiety of Captain Maynard, who seemed to have many consultations with his senior mates, and with Captain Trocadero, who knew those latitudes well.

The sky, usually one of the deepest blue, had given place to one enveloped in murky masses of swiftly-sailing cloud ; there was a gloom aloft and in the now turbid sea, with a close and sultry state of the air that seemed to presage thunder ; and ere long red lightning was seen repeatedly to flash upward from behind a dense and dusky bank of vapour that rested on the ocean away to the north-west, where the waves broke in white and frothy outline against it.

Kit Kentledge with a seaman's instincts was always looking out to windward, and the dark,

stern eyes of Trocadero turned frequently in the same direction ; both shook their heads from time to time, and watched the shifting vane on the mizen truck, where it caught currents of air as yet unfelt below ; and as the day wore on the gusts or blasts of hot wind veered more and more ahead, increasing so much in strength, that after taking in all the light sails, Captain Maynard ordered the watch on deck to "take everything else off her, to the reefed topsails and forecourse."

He was frequently in the engine-room in consultation with the engineer ; often he inspected the glâsses which were falling rapidly and steadily, and he seemed prepared to pass the night on the poop or the bridge between the paddle-boxes.

Lennard noted all these anxieties perhaps more than the other passengers, because he had, unwillingly, been made the interpreter of some of the questions asked by Captain Maynard and the senior mate of Trebucio Trocadero. This sullen and taciturn individual seemed also to prefer facing the coming blast on deck to waiting for it in the cabin ; and when the night closed thoroughly in, the rolling and lurching of the ship was so great, that all the ladies retired to their own cabin earlier than usual ; whereupon, having no one to mount guard over, Señor José, after a mild jorum of sangaree dashed with brandy, tucked himself into his cot ; and after having a rubber or two at whist, Mr. Jones, his two brother officers, and the planters, retired also.

Mr. Nutmeg, the Yankee supercargo, had long

since dozed off to sleep, with his head on a sofa, his heels on a table, a quid of tobacco between his teeth, and another stuck on the point of his knife ready for use.

Lennard was now the only other occupant of the long and elegant saloon cabin, where he lay on one of the sofas or cushioned lockers, endeavouring to reflect if possible amid the incessant and increasing noises on deck, and wondering whether Donna Dora was also awake and similarly occupied within yonder double door which closed the ladies' sanctum for the night.

"Ain't you going to turn in, sir?" asked the steward, who was making his way from lamp to lamp by a succession of zig-zag lurches, and extinguishing all save one, while his mates were shipping the dead-lights, with ring and batten in the after-cabin or ladies' boudoir.

"No, I mean to sleep here," replied Lennard; "I fear we are about to have a rough night, and should like to see it out."

"Fear we shall, sir; it'll blow great guns afore morning, and there are pleasanter places to face than just where we are now, with the reefs of Navasa showing their black teeth through the white breakers to leeward; but more canvas has been set on the ship, and all braced up to give 'em the go-by."

"Navasa; what place is it?"

"An uninhabited island, sir. Last voyage but one we took off from it two shipwrecked men, who had

been there a'most three weeks ; just two hours before we hove in sight they had made up their minds to die, for they were a-starving, and on their knees they both swore a very strange oath."

"What was its tenor?"

"That whoever died first should *not* be eaten by the survivor. It was blowing precious hard at the time, but Mr. Kentledge and six volunteers went off for them in the long-boat, else their bones had been there still, poor fellows."

"And where is this island?"

"Leeward, and I hope well-abeam by this time, sir."

"I mean where situated?"

"Midway a'most between Hispaniola and Jamaica."

"Midway — well, thank Heaven we are so far!"

"True, sir; but that is a wide word in these here seas, and in such a night as this is likely to be," replied the steward, a curly-headed and florid little Englishman, who had been substituting a rough storm garment for his natty blue jacket with its brass buttons, and was tying a sou'wester under his chin. Even he, though half-waiter and half-seaman, was preparing for the contingencies of the night.

Lennard was in a sullen and thoughtful mood, and at that moment felt somewhat defiant alike of fortune and the elemental war.

Stretched on the soft cushions, with the fag-end of a cigar in his mouth and his hands clasped under his head, he lay listening to the piping gusts that ever and anon shook the ship to her centre, the hiss of the heavy spray, and the booming sound on deck, as a sea occasionally pooped her; the orders given hoarsely through the trumpet, half heard and half lost in the bellowing wind that swept them off to leeward; the rattle of the great rudder in its case, as four men now at the wheel, with bare feet planted on the deck-grating, had hard work to keep the vessel, though under steam and close-reefed canvas, to her course.

In the storm, for it almost amounted to one, there was something strangely congenial to Lennard's mood of mind. Donna Dora, piqued by his recent inattention, had barely smiled to him an adieu, when she and the ladies retired; and the memory of the threatening conversation with her padrino still rankled angrily in his mind.

The months he had spent at home, at Oakwoodlee and Blairavon, had proved a term of exciting events; his previous life at Liverpool had been one of routine and monotony, varied only by the hopes and fears of a futile passion, now to be no more remembered.

All these were exchanged for a long and varied sea voyage, under tropical skies, in a magnificent steam-ship; and the present, he felt, should be a period of pleasure, and must have been one perhaps

without alloy, but for the monetary doubts and anxieties already referred to; the strange mystery of Mr. Vere being in secret correspondence with Captain Trocadero, and his proposal to take Sir Cullender as a partner. From this point he strove to turn his thoughts away; he let his cigar-end drop on the floor, and, rocked by the swaying of the vessel, was about to fall dreamily asleep with thoughts of Donna Dora's violet eyes and golden hair, when lo!—

There was a shock—a thundering, booming crash, as if the vessel had been torn asunder; a terrible vibrating or tremulous sensation thrilled through the vast length from stem to stern, and Lennard was flung with violence from the portside away over to starboard, amid a wilderness of chairs, campstools, cushions, books, backgammon-boards, and other *débris* from the various tables.

Partly stunned and bewildered, he lay for nearly a minute where he fell, while pale and startled faces were instantly thrust forth from state-room doors and curtained berths.

“Hollo—what's the doocid row?” elegantly drawled Ensign Jones, timorously peeping forth with parted hair, and eyes very wide open indeed.

“Jerusalem and apple sarce, Captain; but we'll find that out too soon—there's a darned smash o' something on deck, I reckon,” said Mr. Nutmeg, plunging his arms into a pea-jacket.

Exclamations and inquiries made in varying tones, and to which no one could reply, were now heard on all sides, with wild and excited screams from the ladies' cabin, and cries of

"Stewardess — stewardess — dress me immediately! the ship is sinking—sinking—sinking—oh!"

"Ave Maria Purissima!" moaned José Saavedra, muffling himself up in his berth and preparing to go comfortably to the bottom with all his blankets about him; "O—o—o, Jesu Maria y José, el Padre de Nuestro Señor!"

"Get up, you darned crittur, and make yourself useful!" growled the American; "aithquakes and ginger nuts, skipper, what is the matter?" he asked of the steward, who came into the saloon drenched with spray, and with a bleeding hand.

"Bad business on deck, gentlemen, the main-top sail blown out of the men's hands; the foresail split nigh to ribbons, and the ship with all her breadth of beam just on the point of capsizing, when the topmasts and jibboom snapped right off at the caps like barley-sugar, carrying three men away with them to leeward; and that ain't the worst," continued the steward, as he knotted a handkerchief round his bruised and bleeding fingers, chiefly with the aid of his teeth; "the starboard wheel is useless, the shaft snapped when she heeled over, burying it in water, for we are caught in a regular *Pampero*!"

Long ere this had been narrated, Lennard had made his way to the poop-rail, where he clung for some minutes in utter confusion and dismay before his eye and mind, amid the darkness and chaos of the scene, could fairly understand the nature and danger of their disaster.

CHAPTER X.

WHAT CAME OF IT.

THE roaring of the wind, mingled with the blowing off of the steam, made a terrific medley when combined with the flapping of the split forecourse and loose mainsail, the excited voices of the crew, the lashing of ropes that cracked like giant whips on the blast, the groaning of the ship, the deep hoarse boom of every sea that struck her in succession as she pitched like a helpless log. But on falling away before the wind, she rose and fell in heavy plunges on each successive surge that rolled towards her, with sulky crest and heaving ridge dark and curling, till it burst in foam and fury on the decks, sweeping loose spars, buckets, and so forth, to leeward. Around, all was pitchy blackness, and the sea was dark as if its waves were ink, whitened only by foam and spray.

In no way daunted by the critical situation of the ship, Captain Maynard and his mates were already getting her fast into a working state. The star-board shaft—the snapping of which had caused all

the mischief—was in reality outside the ship, and as the wheels were of great value, to save one and get the other in motion were their chief objects.

In such a sea, with the ship disabled aloft, some might have thought these ends impossible of attainment, and would have cut the disabled wheel adrift; but not so the gallant Maynard.

Every man on board was now on deck, and at once two gangs were formed; one, under the chief mate's orders, proceeded to get the loose wreck cut away; the mainsail and rags of the forecourse handed and furled; another, under Maynard and the engineer, was busy upon the starboard wheel, getting off the buckets and hoisting them on deck.

Perilous and slippery work was this, in a wild black night—amid a tearing pampero, with the spray and foam flying over them every moment; but here worked Lennard side by side with Trocadero, and in the excitement of the time he forgot alike the ominous remark of that personage and the threat of Saavedra, for now life and safety depended on the exertions of all on board.

Seeing that the men aloft were sorely impeded by the fury of the wind,

"Quick, my lads, with that mainsail, and stow the bunt!" shouted Maynard through his trumpet from the bridge; "have we the crew of a collier up there? Stow away, and then every man must bear a hand upon the starboard wheel!"

Every hand, ere long, was busy upon it; the wheel was lashed to the timbers of the engine-house by ponderous chains and powerful hawsers, while the carpenters were hard at work placing chaffing boards between it and the ship's side; and after some hours of incessant toil, the crew gave a faint cheer, when, with one wheel revolving, a staysail and reefed mainsail set, the *Golden Dream* began slowly to move through the water. By this time the gale had expended its fury, and a faint light indicated the approach of day.

"Now we shall be able to creep along," said Captain Maynard to Trocadero, "at the rate of some six knots or so, with a weather-helm, if we can't keep our rudder amidships."

The Spaniard gave a growl of satisfaction, and the Captain added:

"Mr. Kentledge, give an order to the steward to issue a tot of grog per man forward—all have done their duty nobly."

"Thank you, sir," replied the boatswain, as he wrung the water from his jacket prior to seeking the steward's store-room; "a caulker does make the gear of human life run smoother in the blocks, and we've had a rough night. Some go to sea for fun and to the devil for pleasure; but I should prefer to look elsewhere for either."

"Waal—they've pluck after all, these Britishers, and don't use their hands only for tearing their hair, like that Spanish crittur in his crib below," said Mr. Jaleel Nutmeg, as he took an approving

survey of the crippled ship, prior to once more seeking his rest in the saloon.

The excitement past, the ship going slowly and laboriously through the sea, which was still rolling in enormous waves, but more gently as the wind had gone down, Lennard was reclining wearily for a few minutes against the break of the poop-deck which there projected a few feet, and formed a kind of shelter in wet weather. The time and place were both gloomy, for the blackness of night yet rested on the sea, though a stripe of distant light showed where day would dawn. Lennard eyed it wistfully, and was just about to solace himself with a cigar, prior to seeking a little repose, when his hand was timidly touched by another, whose soft texture and taper fingers taught him by a thrill to whom it belonged.

"You here, Donna Dora—in the chill air of the early morning!" he exclaimed in a low voice.

"But I am so warmly wrapped up—see how thick my shawl is," said she, cheerfully.

"Where is Señor Saavedra?"

"Where he has been during all this terrible hubbub—quaking in bed and praying to our Lady of Guadalupe. Anyway I have not seen him; but you at least will not leave me—will take care of me," said she in a low tone that stirred the inner chords of his heart; and drawing her arm within his, he pressed it closely.

"You scarcely spoke to me all yesterday—did I offend you?" she resumed.

"Offend me—oh no."

"Then why was this?"

"Another time I shall tell you all."

"Why not now?"

"The explanation would have its perils."

"Is it true that some of our poor sailors have been drowned?"

"Three unfortunate fellows—yes."

"Three! Ave Maria! God bless them—bless and receive them!" said she very devoutly, and shuddering as she looked at the desolate aspect of the ship aloft, and the black sea that was rolling away to leeward; "but is all our danger past?"

"Not quite."

"Ah, tell me how?"

"I understand there is such a strain upon the port wheel, that the shaft may snap again with another dreadful crash."

"Oh, merciful heaven," she exclaimed, not quite understanding what he meant, but inferring something terrible; "if we should perish—die to-night!"

"I care not—if I die thus—with you by my side," said Lennard with a flush of sublime joy, as he bent his face close to hers and could see a tender light in her eyes—a light which the long and tremulous lashes failed to hide.

"You love me then?" said she, after a little pause filled up by the pulsations of her heart.

"I do—passionately—dearly—hopelessly, Dora!" said he, bewildered by a speech and deduction so unexpected.

"Then, why should you not care to die—would you not rather live?" she asked in the same artless manner, and in the same breathless whisper he replied :

"To live would be to waken from my dream."

Then his arm stole round her, and the graceful head, yet muffled in the shawl, dropped for a moment on his shoulder—close to his heart, which was beating wildly.

So the secret of each was out—that they loved each other. She was silent, now and his conversation was made up of disjointed sentences, expressions of tenderness—of love—all said in tones that were soft and low and thrilling; and moments there were of perfect silence, more eloquent perhaps than anything tongue could utter.

And this love scene ensued in no green lane or leafy woodland, in no arbour of roses and honeysuckles, or blooming garden, with amber evening stealing through the trees; but on the deck of a half-dismasted ship, crippled, drenched and wave-worn, toiling through the stormy Carribean sea, which the fury of the pampero had flaked with snowy foam, and while a cold grey dawn was spreading with tropical rapidity over the cheerless waste.

"By Jove, Brown, if that Scotsman isn't actually spoony upon the little Spaniard, even in the middle of all this disgusting row!" said Ensign Jones, of the 5th West India, shivering as the spray hissed over him, when he came from inspecting with vacant wonder the broken wheel, and clinging with



the tenacity of a cat to successive belaying-pins, and getting his feet entangled in the bight of many a loose rope, ere he made a sliding rush to reach the door of the saloon.

Dora was at that very age when courtship becomes the most exquisite time of a young girl's existence. She was in the first flush of a first passion. With Lennard Blair it was not so, and yet he loved her dearly, deeply, and devotedly, clinging to this new passion all the more that he had loved and lost—loved and been disappointed, having his generous and ardent heart thrust back upon himself.

He had not told her that he had never loved before, for that would have been untrue; but he told her that he adored her with all the strength of which his nature—one impulsive as her own—was capable. "The first symptom of true love in a young man is timidity; in a girl it is confidence," says Victor Hugo. "This will surprise, and yet nothing is more simple; the sexes have a tendency to approach, and each assumes the qualities of the other;" and hence it was that the fearless question of Donna Dora, so artlessly put, drew forth the avowal that loaded Lennard's tongue.

The chilly state of the atmosphere now led him, however delightful the situation, to urge that she should retire, and with her soft, deep, liquid eyes, she looked lovingly in his face, as she clung with both hands to his arm for a moment, and with a

strong intonation of her glorious Spanish mingling with her English, said,—

“Adios, Lennard—adios, mi querida—I shall go to sleep if I can, after a night of terror——”

“And a dawn of joy, beloved Dora.”

“Yes, of joy!” and kissing her hand, she glided away with a beautiful smile, leaving Lennard Blair a little bewildered by the suddenness with which the new position had come about, and with a heart full of happiness, but a happiness that was not without alloy,—

They loved each other and had avowed it,
But how about the future?

CHAPTER XI.

THE RING.

“**A**W—aw—rough night the last, by Jove!” drawled the vapid Mr. Jones, using his customary phrase.

“Rayther, Colonel; have a gin cocktail on the head of it?” responded Mr. Nutmeg.

“Thanks; I prefer having brandy-and-soda in a long glass, with ice in it, if the steward has such a thing. This isn’t a late breakfast, but rather a smart little early luncheon, garnished with gruyere and caviare; but we sorely want the kimmel nips, the plovers’ eggs, and pickled oysters to make the thing complete.”

“Queer fixings for breakfast, I reckon, Colonel,” replied the Yankee to the officer, who Lennard, while dressing hastily, knew were seated at table, with some of the other passengers, engaged in partaking of a hasty but late breakfast, such as the steward and his weary assistants could provide after the confusion of the previous night, and the

fall of the spars from aloft having damaged the cook's galley.

Roused from happy dreams, Lennard had sprung from bed and proceeded to finish his toilet with all speed, half fearing that some of the events of last night might also prove a dream.

"And so this haar Jamaikey is your lo-cation, Colonel?" continued the Yankee, with his nasal drawl, while cramming his long leathern jaws with many condiments at once.

"Yes, Mr. Nutmeg; but, as yet, I have the honour only to be ensign," replied Jones, drily.

"A small bit of honour that, I take it. Now, in the United States, we seldom have anything under the rank of colonel. I once knew a Lieutenant Colonel, but *he* kept a coal store, in a small way too, at Buffalo. Waal, and so your Queen locates ye haar? That ain't much to be grateful for; it's an almighty place for rep-tiles! Mosquitoes will bite you all day; wet lizards crawl over you in your first sleep at night; torpedoes lie under your pillow, and the land crabs will look out for you, after being reduced to bare bones by the yellow fever. Sorry for you, I reckon, Ensign Jones."

"Hope you won't find Jamaica so bad a place, after all, sir. Mr. Nutmeg speaks of the past," said the cheerful voice of Captain Maynard. "Pass the word for'ard for more toast, steward. That is Saltpond-hill abeam of us now, for we are in the pilot's hands, and he is taking us between the

Sandy Keys, straight for the harbour. Yonder is the train just starting for Spanish Town. We shall be abreast of Fort Charles directly."

And so the vessel proved to be, when Lennard came forth, after a more than usually careful toilette (how particular he was on this morning about his hair, tie, cuffs, and studs, &c.), to find the saloon already littered by the baggage of the passengers, all of whom were for Kingston, except Señor Saavedra, Donna Dora, Captain Trocadero, and himself.

The crippled aspect of the dismasted steamer attracted some attention from the shore, as she crept slowly into that magnificent basin, which is overlooked by the mountain-range of the Liguanea, and sheltered on the seaward by the long neck of the Palisades, within which the fleets of all the world might anchor with ease and safety.

Seated together at luncheon, or breakfast (for the meal partook of the nature of both), while the *Golden Dream*, now aided by a sturdy tug-steamer, came slowly abreast of Fort Augustus and Mosquito Point, Lennard and Donna Dora were conversing on ordinary topics, and pointing out to each other's notice the opening charms of that beautiful Haven, as they appeared in succession, like a panorama, through the now open windows of the saloon, which admitted the soft, warm breeze from the land, the luxurious grass-fields on the west, and the wooded hills of Healthshire on the south; but while seated thus, we say, no one, even

those who, like the ever-watchful padrino, remarked an unusual flush in Dora's damask cheek, or a brightness in her veiled eyes, would have suspected the secret, so mighty and so tender, which the break of the poop-deck had overheard but a few stormy hours before.

The old Señor José's nervous system had received a severe shock by the catastrophe overnight; and having a constitutional horror of all bustle, on finding the ship given over to noisy gangs of carpenters, white, yellow, and black, who proceeded forthwith to sway up and rig aloft spare spars and masts, while other gangs of Coolies and Negro porters were at work upon the cargo hoisting out and lowering in, and the hammers of a third party were at work upon the damaged wheel: then, added to all of this, were the merry farewells of the officers, who were bound for Up-Park Barracks, of the planters for the Cabaritta River, and many a pen in the Liganea hills; of the fair Diarist, with the false-front, blue goggles, and scalplock, as Mr. Jaleel Nutmeg ungallantly termed her "back hair;" in short, the general hubbub proved too much for the sombre little hidalgo, who, after a vain attempt to face it out sulkily on the poop, in his poncho and sombrero, retired to his berth once more, and left his golden-haired alsi-jada to the care of the only person he dreaded now—Lennard Blair; and amid the intense pre-occupation of all around them, though the great ship lay nearly four days in Kingston Harbour,

the young couple found themselves isolated and alone.

Yet not so much alone as they supposed; for Captain Trocadero, who never left the ship, had been taken into the confidence and secret service of Saavedra, who having early discovered that the sulky mariner had a private grudge at Lennard, requested him to keep an eye upon his ward. This the truculent Spaniard readily promised to do, and thus saw much of an intimacy which he was, as yet, without the means or direct authority for stopping; but which nevertheless led him to form some very daring plans on his own account, and of these we shall hear more elsewhere.

So they promenaded on the poop under the broad awning without interruption; played many a dreamy game of chess; again and again she sang to him the little romance of Pedro de Padilla (which he had heard on the first night they met on board), and many more beside; but how could Trocadero stop this?

And their evenings on the deck, when the glorious moon lighted up the harbour like a mirror and seemed to fill its waters with phosphorescent fires, that shot in strange forms to and fro, mingling with the tremulous rays of the lamps reflected from Kingston and Port Royal—tranquil and starry evenings that were full of happiness and hopeful promises to be read in each other's eyes!

How was Trocadero to stop these either? He could but steal stealthy glances at a pleasure in which

he had no share ; thrust his huge hands into the yellow Spanish sash which he now wore, and mutter, "Carajo—Satanos !"

The first day of mutually expressed love past, the poetry of their existence became seasoned by a little prose, and Lennard began to speak of her family, of the step they previously had taken, and of her father's concurrence ; that of his own friends none were living now. He told her too of his position in life, and that he was going to Mexico as the administrador, agent, and partner of a Liverpool mercantile house.

"Bueno !" said she, gaily ; "I told you that my dear papa is a merchant too. How fortunate !"

"We are happy—very happy now, Dora ; but a day will come—is coming too surely and too fast—when our *Golden Dream* will be in port again."

"I hope so—well ?"

"You do not see my meaning," said he, with a sigh ; "what then shall you do, and what shall I ?"

"Do ; I must rush ashore and embrace papa—if he is not, as I am sure he will be—on board to anticipate me."

"And then you must learn to forget that you ever met such a person as Lennard Blair ; our dear dream of love will then be over, Dora !"

"Do not speak thus. It is impossible. I am sure that papa will love you quite as much as—as I do—he must, he *shall* do so !" she added vehemently, her eyes flashing through their tears.

Lennard smiled sadly, and shook his head incredulously while toying with her little hands, on a finger of which he slipped a ring and begged her acceptance of it for his sake.

It was an antique signet, which had belonged to his father, and was indeed a world too large even for Dora's thumb; but she had another ring as a guard to protect it.

"It is a bloodstone, so I must treasure it very much. It is something almost sacred!"

"How so?"

"I can remember my aunt, who is a nun of our Lady of Guadalupe, telling me the story of its origin. When the holy blood from that wicked spear which pierced our Saviour's side fell from the cross, it dropped on some green jaspers at the foot thereof, so the stone has been spotted with red ever since."

Lennard did not tell her that Scotland's volcanic rocks were full of just such jaspers; but he kissed her hand in token that she had accepted the last and only gift of which Travice Cheatwood had failed to despoil him.

"If I have had but a delightful dream, I must strive to content me with its memory," he would sigh in his heart.

"Do you know, Lennard, that I felt a strange liking for you on that night when I first recognized you again in the cabin,—an emotion which—which—made me long to have you as a friend. What could it be?"

"I cannot say—I do not flatter myself that—that it was——"

"That it was what?"

"Love at first sight."

"Pho! you might have felt that for me; not I for *you*."

"What emotion was it then, Dora?"

"I cannot tell, *mi querida*—but something seemed to speak in my heart."

"Such a little fairy it is!" exclaimed Lennard, as he caressed her soft bright hair.

"What right," he would often ask himself, "have I to offer her a heart already seared and callous with disappointment?" But male hearts can stand a deal of searing and cauterizing at five-and-twenty, though Lennard had not yet learned to think so.

Dora, even in the flush of her love for him, was not without secret fears of just opposition to their passion at home; there was the proverbial flintiness of a father's heart, and a Spanish father's in particular; there were the antagonism of race, of religion, and, it might be, too surely, of means and position, and perhaps a pre-arranged alliance. Then her loving heart would grow troubled, her soft voice tremulous, her dark eyes would fill and their lids become heavy; her little hands would play nervously with that huge signet ring, which, though she could not foresee it, was yet to play another important part in her history, and she would for periods be sunk in thought.

At these times, as he sat watching her, Lennard, had he dared, would have clasped her to his breast; but there was a strange pride in Dora, with all her *abandon*, and the very purity and confidence of the girl's manner repelled the passionate impulse.

Could he have looked into Donna Dora's heart, he might have discovered that his chances of offending were not deeply seated, for there was more of love for him growing up and maturing there than the girl actually knew—nor would know till an hour of separation came—untutored as she was in the ways of the world, and in the secret springs of thought.

In the tenour of his intercourse with Dora, there were none of the poutings, the occasional fits of vague coldness, the angry and jealous outbursts, the chilling and concealed suspicions that characterized the term of his affair with Hesbia Vere, the calculating flirt, whose object in life had really but one end and aim,—to retain all the luxuries of life, and secure a good position by marriage.

With Donna Dora it was a clinging affection—the full spring tide of a first love, for her whole heart had gone forth to Lennard Blair, “the kind, thoughtful, and soft-eyed young man, who had saved them from some dreadful affronts in England—who had come with them over the sea, and with whom she had so many topics and interests in common,” as she afterwards wrote to her horrified aunt, at the convent of our Lady of Guadalupe.

Lennard longed with a species of vague terror—if such a word can be used—for the issue of all this.

“To what end do I love again?” he would think, in his times of self-examination; “and if the warnings of Saavedra be true, why love her, of all women, embittering, destroying perhaps my career in South America, before I have placed a foot upon its soil? Riches on one hand (mammon—always mammon!), doubt and, it may be, poverty on the other? A foreign lineage—strange sympathies—every obstacle that one can think of, for her father, this señor, or Don Dominga, or whatever he is called, though English by birth, may prove a vast deal too Spanish for my taste, or quite to relish me.”

Such were Lennard’s misgivings, which became more confirmed when the *Golden Dream*, after being under repair day and night, had once more put to sea, and after he had seen the long wavy chain of the Blue Mountains, with their vales and savannahs between, their fields of bright green cane and clusters of snow-white houses, fade amid amber and gold far away astern, and turn from red to violet in the fiery setting sun, and from thence to a cold neutral tint, when midnight saw the ship upon the starlit waves that wash the lonely Caymans.

CHAPTER VII.

TREACHER MEETS A SHEPHERD.

MISFORTUNE was still in search for that good ship the *Golden Dream*. A serious leak, caused previously by the commission she had undergone in the pump-rooms, had been discovered, beyond the reach of her carpenters, and some of her lower compartments were full of water. The cargo was a valuable one: so some days after their departure from Kingston saw her standing with full steam on and every foot of canvas stretched to the yard-heads, not across the Gulf of Mexico, but—after traversing the channel of Yucatan and rounding the Point of Pedro—making direct for the town and bay of Campeche, where, as Captain Maynard knew, there was a good dock in which he could have his great vessel completely overhauled, ere her lading were destroyed; and this necessity was the more provoking, that they were now only one hundred and seventy miles distant from Tampico, and, of course, less from La Vera Cruz; but the reports of the carpenters were so urgent and alarm-

ing, that Maynard was glad when he found himself at anchor in the shallow bay, and surrounded by tugs, lighters, and other craft, for getting out the cargo and lightening the ship.

To two other persons on board, Dora and Lennard Blair, this unexpected delay was alone a source of satisfaction, as it would enable them to be a few days longer in each other's society undisturbed by the fear of separation; but this hope was speedily dissipated, for on the morning after their arrival in the bay, and just when Lennard was pencilling in Dora's album a sketch of the old town of San Francisco de Campeaché, with its walls of stone, the fort with the Republican flag flying, the groves of cocoa-trees, and the huts of the Indian saltmakers roofed with palmetto leaves, and far beyond the distant Siena that overlooks New Merida and Valladolid—Señor Saavedra came to announce to her that Captain Trocadero had discovered a ship about to sail for Vera Cruz—a swift vessel, commanded by an old shipmate of his, in which Captain Maynard would, he had no doubt, secure a passage for them both—if not he would do so himself.

“And I shall secure one for you too, if you wish it, Mr. Blair,” added the captain, who overheard the señor's hasty and exulting announcement, and saw how painfully Lennard changed colour; “I should be loth to part friends,” he added with a wink, while Saavedra struck his heel on the deck with ill-concealed passion. “The ship won't be habitable while she is being careened, and the

posadas ashore are not the most comfortable hotels in the world. My boatswain Kit Kentledge—though I can ill spare him—shall go with you at the same time, as I have to forward some of the ship's papers by a sure hand to Tampico, so he shall sail as far as Vera Cruz, which lies on his way."

"The captain, Manuel Moreno, who commands the cutter *Gaviota*, declines to take any other passengers on board than the Señor Saavedra, the young lady who is his ward, and myself," said Captain Trocadero, gruffly.

"Indeed?" said Captain Maynard, surveying that personage coolly.

"Positivimente!" added Saavedra, with covert anger gleaming in his eyes.

"I have no intention of being intrusive," Lennard was beginning, when Maynard interrupted him:

"There is some trickery here; is this Captain Moreno coming on board soon?"

"He is on board now," replied Saavedra, twisting up his huge black moustaches.

"Where?"

"In the saloon awaiting us."

"I shall get the principal aduanero, who is now in the hold, to arrange this matter for me," said Captain Maynard; "Mr. Blair wishes to get on without delay, and my boatswain must also go, that he may anticipate our arrival at Tampico."

On the mention of the aduanero (or custom-house officer), who was then on board in his Mexican

uniform, a very marked change came over the face and bearing of Trocadero ; and there was an angry if not disturbed expression in the face of Captain Moreno, on hearing that the interest of that official might be used in the affair.

This old shipmate of Trebucio Trocadero seemed to be every way his counterpart. His hair and beard were of raven blackness ; he wore gold rings in his ears ; his figure, which denoted only clumsy strength, was taller perhaps and more bulky than that of Trocadero, but he had the same swarthy visage, the same keen, stealthy, and fierce-looking eyes, and the same species of cruel mouth. He wore his hair in a net under a broad-leaved hat of coarse plaited straw, secured to his bull-like neck by a ropeyarn lanyard. A sash of several colours girt his wrist, and the bone haft of a dagger-looking knife appeared stuck in the side of his right boot, just as a Scottish Highlander wears his skene dhu.

The shrunken sleeves of his scarlet flannel shirt showed that a crucifix was marked by gunpowder on one arm, while a mermaid with a curling tail adorned the other. He spoke little, but seemed to watch others well and to listen intently. He now warmly agreed—without having the intervention of the Aduanero, of whom he evidently had a professional horror—to take the four passengers to Vera Cruz for twenty-five dollars, including a girl of colour named Jacinta, who would attend upon Donna Dora.

“ When do you sail ? ” asked Maynard, as

he paid over the money and docketed a receipt for it.

"We cleared out yesterday, señor," replied Moreno in a thick low voice, as he placed the dollars in his sash; "and though the wind is a head one, we shall start this evening. You may see our gaff topsail loose, from where we are sitting now," he added, pointing to a cutter at anchor about a mile off and nearer in shore than the *Golden Dream*, for the port of Campeaché is shallow, with a rise of only three feet in the tide.

"A smart-looking craft yours," said Maynard, approvingly; "she sits in the water like a Cowes yacht! Not a usual style of rig in these seas, I should say?"

"On a wind there are not many craft that could overtake her. She was built on the Pacific side, and I actually brought her once round the Horn laden with salted hides."

"What is your cargo composed of now?"

"Oh, the usual kind of things, señor."

"That is no answer, Captain Moreno," said Maynard, who seemed to have some undefined suspicion of this personage.

"Well—logwood, turtle, cotton, and ropes of twisted grass."

"For Vera Cruz?"

"Yes, for the British traders there."

"Crew complete?"

"All, señor, and ready for sea; the cutter is hove short on her cable even now, and might have

been outside the horns of the bay by this time, had I not met my old shipmate Trocadero, at La Caza de los Noches, a wine-house near the fort."

"I know the place, Captain Moreno—la Muchacha Amarilla*—and a bad reputation the place has. I should not like to venture there with many dollars or yellow boys in my pocket."

"Nor I, señor," replied Moreno, with a peculiar laugh. "When may my passengers be on board?"

"Whenever they choose—in an hour, if that will suit Donna Dora?" replied Maynard.

"She will be ready to go in less time than that, *now*, I suppose," said Saavedra, with a furtive glance at Lennard, who felt quite as an intruder on him, on Trocadero, and too probably on the captain of *La Gaviota*; but he cared not a rush so long as the arrangement secured for him a few hours more of Dora's society, even under circumstances so adverse as the space of a small vessel afforded.

"Keep a bright look-out on that ere customer—he's an old Francisco pirate, if ever there was one!" was the parting injunction of Mr. Jaleel Nutmeg, whispered in Lennard's ear; "as we say of the Kentuck rowdys, he's half alligator and half horse, with a cross of the earthquake, so look out for squalls in crossing the gulf. Keep your bowie-knife loose in your necktie, and chuck it into him like a flash of lightning if he begins to rile you!"

And these ominous words were lingering in

* i. e. the Yellow Girl.

Lennard's ear, as the boat was shoved off from the *Golden Dream*, after Captain Maynard, politely with cap in hand, had assisted Donna Dora down the side ladder from the starboard paddle-box.

"No more games of chess, I fear, Lennard mio," she whispered, while Blair wrapped her mantle about her in the stern sheets, and Kit Kentledge grasped the yoke-lines to steer.

"And no more music; I fear there will be little harmony on board the *Gaviota*."

But Lennard little knew how prophetically he spoke.

"Give way, lads—stretch out!" cried Kentledge, and the boat with its freight shot out upon the glassy bay, from the towering side of the *Golden Dream*.

CHAPTER XIII.

LA GAVIOTA.

AMID a sky of fiery haze, by which it was shorn of its beams, the sun, like a vast globe of flaming crimson, sank with tropical rapidity into a sea of the same sanguine hue—the western waters of the mighty Gulf of Mexico. The Bay of Campeaché seemed as if turned to ruddy wine; the ramparts of the fort and town, the long low polaccas at anchor outside, even the groves of cocoa-trees and the cane brakes that spread almost to the bases of the hills of Yucatan, were all bathed for a time in the same fiery tints, which were deepening fast to violet and to blue, when one of the large metallic quarter-boats of the *Golden Dream*, with the five passengers and the lightest portions of their baggage came sheering alongside the *Gaviota*, whose vast boom-mainsail and gaff hung loose in the brails, while her jib and staysail were half-roused out of the nettings and ready for hoisting.

They were speedily on deck; a hasty “good-bye”



was cried in English by the coxswain of the boat ; she shot off on her way back to the ship, and they found themselves left to their own fortunes on board *La Gaviota*, or the *Seagull*. The order was given by Captain Moreno to weigh ; the cable was already hove short, so the anchor was atrip after a heave or two, and being only eight hundredweight or so, it soon hung dripping at the bows, under which the water began to curl when the orders to "hoist away—let fall—and sheet-home," spread the great boom-mainsail, gaff-topsail, jib and jib-staysail, while the cross-jack-yard, which was only used when she went free before the wind, was braced sharp up ; and then bending beneath the western breeze, the sloop, which was only of a hundred and fifty tons, careened well over to leeward, as she flew through the water on a long northern tack, heading towards the gulf.

The Bay of Campeaché seemed to close rapidly ; the town and fort vanished ; and, seated on a campstool with Señor José and Lennard Blair smoking silently near her, each muffled in his poncho, Dora, to whom so small a vessel seemed, as it truly was, novel and comfortless in the extreme—gazed somewhat wistfully at the mountain-ranges, whose scalps and peaks were yet tinted by a fiery red, while their bases were lost in hazy blue obscurity below.

The decorations of the *Gaviota* appeared to be unfinished, or of a somewhat varied order ; for the sharp nautical eye of Kit Kentledge soon detected, when looking over the gunnel, that she had a narrow

red streak on her portside, with a broad white one to starboard. The entire hull was painted of a bright light green colour, outside and inside; her decks were perfectly clean; she had two brass guns, nine-pounders, aft, and all her crew wore knives of an unpleasant length and aspect in their sashes.

These fellows were all tatterdemallions, and as picturesque and ruffianly in appearance as shock heads of black hair, unkempt beards, and swarthy complexions could make them; and they varied in colour, from dark copper to yellow and red. Old sombreros, nets and nightcaps, were their head-dresses, and their attire consisted only of well-worn red or blue flannel shirts and tattered canvas breeches or slops, girt at the waist by belts or sashes. To Lennard's eye they looked like the pirates of a melodrama; but Dora and her padrino saw in them only coasting Mexican seamen.

"A sweet little craft this is, sir," said Mr. Kentledge in Lennard's ear, "and I would enjoy the voyage uncommonly but for the looks o' these gallows-birds, her skipper and crew."

"More picturesque than pleasant, certainly."

"A rum lot they are, I think; but see how trim and smart she is in her bows, and what a rake aft in everything: with her sheets trimmed as they are now, how lightly she does bend over, lift to windward and then over again, smacking through the breeze and gliding over the wave-tops like a flying fish; and then look aloft—every spar is as taper and clean as a fishing-rod! Them's the

Mexican colours at the gaff-peak ; but I don't think as the skipper Moreno cares much what bunting he sails under."

"The skull and crossbones would be more to his taste, you mean ?"

"Exactly, sir—only steamers have put such things out o' fashion—'cept in Borneo or the China seas."

Out upon the waters of the gulf now, the increasing size of the waves, the freshening of the breeze, and the occasional showers of spray, compelled Donna Dora to summon from among the crew in the forecabin—where, sooth to say, the damsel seemed very much at home—her new attendant, Jacinta, as she meant to retire below for the night.

Lennard having hastened to bring Jacinta (a laughing, rosy, and somewhat pretty girl, with much of tawdry Mexican finery about her, in the form of beads and rings, a truly Mexican scantiness of skirt, a skin like a new doubloon, and eyes as black as sloes)—now proffered his arm to Dora ; but he was bluntly anticipated and repelled by Saavedra, who half-led, half-pulled her towards the companion hatch, which she passed through and then descended with difficulty, giving, ere she disappeared, a farewell smile to Lennard.

To the latter Saavedra then turned, and endeavouring to steady himself, for now the sloop was pitching heavily, while puffing out his little figure and smoothing his enormous moustaches, he said :

"Now, señor, that we are on board of a Mexican ship, and under the colours of the Republic, permit me to impress upon you that those passing flirtations which the levity of English society, and still more that of the French, allow or sanction, will no longer be tolerated!"

"I do not understand your tone—still less your interference," replied Lennard, haughtily.

"Nor I yours," responded Saavedra, all the more courageously that both Moreno and Trocadero, each with a malevolent smile in his deep eyes and a cigarito in his hairy mouth, were ominously hovering near. "You will bear in mind, señor, that when Donna Dora is below, I have to request your presence on deck—when she is on deck, your presence below!"

"By which arrangement I shall have the pleasure of being on deck all night?"

"Unless you prefer the water—"

"One word more of this, señor," said Lennard, in a fever heat with rage, "and by Heaven I'll fling you overboard."

The diminutive señor shrunk back on hearing this menace, which was made with a resolute step towards him. Trocadero, who enjoyed the quarrel, laughed aloud, but Moreno said gruffly:

"Carajo, señores! I'll have no quarrelling on board my ship."

"My passage to Vera Cruz is paid for, Captain Moreno," urged Lennard, who felt himself somewhat helpless and friendless; "I have no desire

to intrude on any one—the lady least of all; but I shall claim my right to the use of the cabin, in spite of this little mountebank and his threats.”

“That may or may not be,” was the sulky and dubious response of Moreno, as he turned away in conference with Saavedra, whom the epithet of *saltimbanco* filled with rage; and resolving that at all hazards he would seek the cabin when the time suited him, Lennard walked forward to the bows of the sloop, which was still flying along the coast. The latter was receding, however, as she sped on her lengthy tack northwards and west.

Lennard now recalled the threats of Trocadero and Saavedra, and felt that policy required him to dissemble, for he was completely at the mercy of these men and their crew of ferocious-looking half-bloods, who, unaware that he knew Spanish, or more probably not caring a jot whether he did so, uttered oaths, jests, and phrases in his hearing that made him shudder.

“Patience!” thought he; “time cures all, and twenty-four hours, if the wind changes, will see us in sight of Vera Cruz.”

He felt lonely and inclined to indulge in reverie, for when the lovely moon arose, the great spread of canvas that towered like a cloud from the small hull of *La Gaviota*, in its whiteness and peculiarity of form, made her indeed resemble some vast sea-bird skimming over the deep. Beneath her sharp prow the cleft water bubbled and flashed in diamond

showers, while all around the waves seemed full of silvery or phosphorescent light emitted by the enormous quantity of decaying organic and unorganic matter which is for ever sweeping through the Gulf of Mexico from its chief tributary the Mississippi—the “ancient father of rivers.”

While leaning over the vessel's side, and gazing dreamily at the bright water, which seemed full of shining monsters as it flew past, Lennard was roughly startled from his reverie by a loud crash close beside him.

“Look out aloft there, you coloured lubber!” cried Kentledge, with an adjective that needs not to be recorded.

“What is the matter?” asked Lennard.

“Matter enough, sir—just look at that ere marlin-spike!”

Above his head he now perceived a man astride the cross-jack-yard at work upon the furled foresail, whistling leisurely, and insolently careless of the catastrophe that might have happened; for he had permitted a sharp-pointed marlin-spike of iron, some pounds in weight, to fall within an inch or two of where Lennard was standing. It penetrated nearly three inches into the solid deck.

“Done o’ purpose, sir—done o’ purpose; I saw how the beggar let slip the lanyard from his neck,” said Kentledge.

“Designedly—do you think so?”

“I do—he acted ’cording to orders, I’ve no doubt. My advice to you, sir, is to keep always

aft and clear o' the rigging ; things often fall from aloft in a craft like this, and no warning given."

" The scoundrel ! could I be but sure——"

" Hush, sir—have you a pair of pistols in your box ? "

" No."

! " A bowie-knife, then ? "

" Never thought of having such a thing ; but why ? "

" We may need such tools afore long, for we ain't so safe here as if aboard a Gravesend steamer. They're a bad lot as mans this cutter, sir—a precious bad lot ! I don't know much o' their Spanish lingo, but I can gather, Mr. Blair, that you and I are two passengers more than are wanted in the cabin."

Lennard had few fears save for Dora ; yet it might be that he and the boatswain were in peril ; if so, it would be through the instrumentality of Saavedra and Trocadero, men " accustomed to the lawless licence of a band, where each, with his own right hand, makes the law." Then how much more lawless were such likely to prove upon the open sea !

He began to fear then a design upon his life ; and if so, the life of the poor boatswain might go too, as the best means of ensuring *his* silence.

What so easy as to say that both were washed overboard in the night ? and who abroad cares now for British consuls or for British cruisers ? So

they might pass away for ever, and the Spanish girl, Dora, alone be left to weep for one whose fate she could never unravel.

Lennard's dream occurred to him—that painful and exciting vision of himself knocked headlong into the sea—the lights streaming upon him from the cabin windows—the pale, ferocious face of Trocadero, and the paler one of the shrieking Dora, as he drifted away to drown, unheeded and unaided, astern!

Was that dream but a foreshadowing of events now close at hand? To Trocadero, we have said, it was evident that Lennard knew something more of his past and recent history than he cared any man should know—and live.

“For to-night, at least, we must watch and sleep by turns, Kentledge,” said Lennard.

“Agreed, sir; but I wishes I had sommat else to watch with than this old jack-knife.”

“Life is a strange game of hazard, after all; and, like every other game, owes too often less to skill and forethought than to chance or fortune.”

“In other words, sir, you mean——”

“Destiny!” said Lennard, gloomily.

“I doesn't know much about what that may be, sir; but this I knows, that the best years o' my life have been spent aloft—between heaven and ocean—between God's blessed sea and God's blessed sky; and, hap what may, I ain't afear'd o' this coloured lot, d—n me if I am!”

"Well, Kit, don't let them see us too much together, or that we suspect them."

"I am not such a poor player as to show them my hand, till the time comes to clench it, believe me."

Without undressing, Kit Kentledge and Lennard slept by turns, "spell and spell about," as the former phrased it, on the lockers in the cabin, where for some hours the Captains Moreno and Trocadero sat drinking Leeward Island rum and toying with Jacinta, the camarera of Donna Dora.

The night passed without adventure or interruption, and when day broke, *La Gaviota* was still careering northward and west, braced sharp up against the west wind.

Whether she had made a southward tack in the night, they knew not, for the surly skipper and crew were averse to afford any information on the subject.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHAT KENTLEDGE HEARD.

THIS day was to reveal more of prospective danger to the occupants of the cabin than they could have deemed probable.

The weather was rough and lowering, so Dora spent most of the time in the comfortless little cabin, while Lennard, to avoid any annoyance on the part of Saavedra, remained chiefly on deck, conversing with Kentledge and solacing himself with a cigar.

To Dora, the close, ill-savoured and dingy little cabin of the *Gaviota* seemed squalid and miserable, after the spacious and gorgeous saloon of the *Golden Dream*. The buccaneer aspect of Moreno appalled her, while the forward and clumsily flip-pant bearing of Trocadero and of Jacinta excited her anger. She felt exasperated against Señor José, whose too jealous care of her had placed her under circumstances of such discomfort, when a few days' delay at a posada in Campeaché would have enabled them all to proceed by the English

steamer ; so she reckoned every hour she spent on board as one passed in a species of corporeal purgatory.

Lennard, on his part, of course did not regret that for her sake he had left the splendid steam liner ; but he secretly reprobated the incautious policy of Saavedra in placing himself and Dora in a situation which already proved one of peril to both, and might ere long end in disgrace and death to her !

In the morning, when assisted by Jacinta to dress, Donna Dora found that gay quadrone careless even to insolence, and by no means disposed to submit, even in the least degree, to the angry petulance of a proud young lady. The camarera's person, too, proved unpleasantly redolent of negro-head tobacco and of aguardiente de Azucar—or Leeward Island rum.

Thrice during the day Dora came on deck to entreat Saavedra to remain beside her in the cabin, and on these occasions Lennard Blair could perceive that her eyes were full of tears and her cheek inflamed by anger, which she was at no pains conceal.

In truth, Jacinta had been seating herself on the knee of Manuel Moreno, who kissed and toyed with her before the very eyes of Donna Dora, to whom Trocadero made more than one flattering speech, the import of which she could not mistake, so she became filled with anger and fear.

When Lennard, who was somewhat deficient in

the essential virtue of Job, haughtily and firmly ventured to remonstrate, Moreno threw aside all disguise, if indeed he ever assumed any.

"Señor, be wary," said he, "or a loop and a leap from the arm of the cross-jack-yard are all I'll give you."

"Dare you to threaten me?" was the resolute rejoinder.

"Small daring there is in that," said Moreno, with a scornful laugh; "but hark you, Señor Administrador—for such I understand you are,—the world consists of two classes,—scoundrels and fools. I am content to be a scoundrel; but don't you seek to be a fool and throw your life away before the time—and for a chit-faced girl too. As for your life, we mean to give you a chance for it *ashore*; but if you meddle with me aboard my own ship—*morte de Dios!*"

He ground his teeth and touched the handle of his knife, with ferocious significance.

The rum-bottle stood perpetually on the cabin table, and it was frequently applied to, though neither quadrant nor chart were thought of. Lenard saw all this. He looked forward to the coming night with intense anxiety, and was constantly sweeping the horizon with his glass for a passing sail; but even the slender hope of such protection slipped away, for not even a sea-bird was to be seen, breaking the monotony of the world of water around the flying *Gaviota*.

Kit Kentledge, who marvelled at the duration of

the tacks northward as compared with the cutter's southing, often consulted her course by a passing glance at the compass; but was always warned gruffly to "stand clear of the binnacle, and mind his own business."

In the course of this inauspicious day Moreno quarrelled with one of his crew, a tall, dark and swarthy fellow named Miguel Galvez, from Barquismeta, in the Spanish Main, whom he had detected whispering with Jacinta in the forecabin.

Arming his right hand with an implement known among seamen as the "brass-knuckles," with his left he seized the throat of Miguel, and cruelly and savagely beat him about the face and head, till his features were obscured by blood, and the unfortunate fellow was well-nigh blinded.

Lennard attempted to interfere by seizing the uplifted hand of Moreno, who instantly drew a pistol from his sash, exclaiming,—

"Par el santo de los Santos! but I'll serve you the same way or worse, if you aid a vile mutineer (amotinador)."

Panting with rage, Moreno descended to his rum-bottle in the cabin, and the mutilated Miguel Galvez crawled away to the forecabin to scheme out vengeance, while his shipmates soused his head with salt-water and bound up his wounds.

This outrageous conduct, and the general bearing of all on board, rendered Lennard doubly anxious for the issue of the voyage; and a climax was put

to his fears, when, some time after the recent uproar, he was joined by Kentledge, who whispered,—

“ Sir, I have reason to fear that this here *Gaviota* is not bound for Vera Cruz at all.”

“ For where then, in Heaven’s name?”

“ T’other place would become her style o’ crew better; but I think she’s bound for some port on the northern side of Gulf.”

“ I cannot understand this. Her size is so small—her rig so peculiar for these seas; but her consignment and papers must have borne that she was cleared out for Vera Cruz.”

“ True; but they’ll doctor their log, if they keep one at all; and they may have two sets of papers aboard. Did you never hear of a merchant keeping two sets o’ books? There’s some scheme a-foot for keeping the young lady till she is ransomed by her father—if *then* he’ll think her worth ransoming. Old Saavedra is worth a pot o’ money, and they say his signature will make their fortunes. Meantime, they are for having a spree on some island in the Gulf, with a grab at the girls and the passengers’ luggage.”

“ How have you learned all this, Kentledge?” asked Lennard in a breathless whisper, and with intense anxiety.

“ From the chap that was knuckledusted; he told me as much in his rage. Moreno and Trocadero are, as you may see, half-savages by nature, and have both been Coolie crimps; and as for their entire crew, only that the barracoons are empty

and this craft ain't the rig for the coast, I would think she was a West African pleasure-boat, outward bound, with black passengers under hatches."

"Slaver and pirate seem indeed written in the faces of all these men."

"Yes, sir; but then all furriners have a rum look to an Englishman's eye."

Trocadero and Saavedra had been close companions during the first evening, and had held many conferences together; but Lennard now perceived an estrangement between them; a constraint on the part of the former, and a haughty aversion on that of the latter, who was a retired merchant of Tampico, and one of the richest men in the province. He had seen or detected something in the two skippers which served to excite his alarm, pride, and anger.

Anxious only for Dora's safety, and stung to the heart by the surmises and grave communications of Kentledge, Lennard dissembling his dislike to Saavedra, took an opportunity of drawing near him when he was alone.

"Señor," said he in a low voice, "may I crave a word with you?"

Saavedra bowed coldly, and without the faintest vestige of a smile.

"I have a question to ask——"

"Ask it."

"About what time this evening, think you, we may be in sight of land?"

"The captain alone knows—how should I?"

"The captain knows more than he is likely to impart either to you or to me," said Lennard, and a deep glance was exchanged between him and Saavedra.

"You share my suspicions of falsity and of intended foul play," said the latter.

"I do most fully. I have been warned that there is a scheme on board to touch at some other port or island in the Gulf——"

"This but confirms my fears!" said Saavedra, whose voice sunk into a husky whisper as he made a violent effort to control his emotion, for Moreno was at that moment on deck, but looking keenly to windward, where the evening star could be seen twinkling above the wave-tops. "In seeking to save Dora Dominga, my dear old friend's daughter, from your intrusive advances—I am plain with you, señor, but pardon me, for I am your superior, at least in years,—I have placed her life, yea, more than her life, and all our lives, it may be, in deadly peril. Better had we waited a month—even a year—at Campeaché till the *Golden Dream* was refitted and ready to proceed, than have ventured forth in such a vessel as this!"

"Then what is to be done now?"

"Madre de Dios! what *can* be done; but watch, and wait, and pray?"

"And endure and suffer when the time comes," added Lennard, bitterly; "we are but three men, and unarmed, to thirteen."

"Then," said Saavedra, inquiringly, "can yonder boatswain be trusted?"

Lennard looked to where Kentledge, with his hands in his pockets, his outspread feet planted on the deck, his round glazed hat stuck on the nape of his neck, and his bluff, weatherbeaten, honest English face turned inquiringly to windward, seemed the beau-ideal of a British tar.

"Trusted!" echoed Lennard, with a bitter laugh; "would to Heaven we had but three more like him!"

Unarmed and upon the open sea, Lennard felt himself alone the protector—if such he could be called—of that fair and delicate young girl; for Señor José was a feeble fool, Kentledge had himself to protect, Trocadero was a designing ruffian, and the girl Jacinta a worthless creature.

"Oh," thought Lennard, as he struck his foot on the deck in vexation of spirit, and as a somewhat unwonted gust of ferocity swelled his heart; "oh for a brace of pistols, that I might make the lives of two of those wretches pay the penalty of Dora's and my own!"

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE GULF OF MEXICO.

THE weather was getting more and more rough, and by the time that evening drew on it had freshened to "half a gale" as the sailors phrase it.

The cutter was still making long tacks against a head wind, and Lennard hoped that ere night fell the land would be in sight; but he bent his gaze westward in vain. Ere this, according to what Señor Saavedra had told him, the mighty volcanic summit of Orizaba—the most elevated mountain in New Spain—should have been visible.

Frequent conferences took place between Moreno, Trocadero, and some of the crew; and Lennard could gather that these worthies had become somewhat bewildered as to their whereabouts; so evening deepened fast into night, and still the light sloop flew on.

The moon was nearly full; but masses of cloud intervened at times, throwing swift shadows and uncertain obscurities upon the ocean. The wind was becoming unsteady, and blew occasionally in

strong gusts. At one time the *Gaviota* would be shooting on smoothly and silently through the rolling sea; at another the waves would whiten, become frothy, and burst in foam and fury over her bows, sending the hissing spray aft to the taffrail.

At last the grand silver disc of the Mexican moon was completely hidden in masses of dusky vapour, and there was no light upon the sea save the faint rays that flickered from the binnacle lamp of the *Gaviota*.

An intuitive motion of doubt kept Kentledge the boatswain on deck; Saavedra, weary of pacing to and fro there during the entire day, had dozed off to sleep in his berth without undressing, and Donna Dora reclined on the stern-locker asleep, with her head on Lennard's shoulder, and her eyes closed placidly, for she knew nothing of the multitude of perils that surrounded her.

Her breathing was long and regular; her dark lashes rested on her rounded cheeks, and there was a calm beauty in her face, on which some passing thought in her half slumber had left a gentle smile. Lennard's cheek propped her head, and the silken masses of her golden hair fell over his breast. He held his poncho round her, and there they were seated, hand in hand, she sleeping and he acutely awake, when suddenly he heard sounds on deck—sounds that were louder than usual.

The hoarse voice of Moreno was heard to shout,
"Hard a-port, timonero—hard a-port with the helm instantly."

The order was at once obeyed, for Lennard felt the position and motion of the cutter changed, and the flapping and jibbing of the great boom-main-sail overhead as she came sharply up on the star-board tack. But now the bustle increased and several voices exclaimed in terror—

“Rocas—escollasy rocas! (Rocks and breakers.) Cuidado, capitano mio—cuidado, por amor de Dios!”

At these alarming cries Lennard softly quitted the side of *Dora*, and rushed on deck to behold a very appalling sight.

Through a shapeless mass of torn and ragged-looking cloud, the pale moon was peeping forth, half hidden and half seen, and by the cold and partial gleams she cast along the desolate sea, he could behold a reef of black rocks, over the ridgy back of which the water was boiling in white and sullen fury; and these rocks were close under the lee-bow of the *Gaviota*, while beyond them rose an obscure mass, which seemed at first to be a dark fog-bank, but which rapidly assumed the aspect of an island.

“Up all hands; clear away the anchors!” cried Moreno, who certainly exerted himself manfully to save his little vessel, and Trocadero seconded his efforts, and did a vast amount of blustering and swearing in deep and sonorous Spanish. “Presto, hombres! haul aft the lee jib-sheet.”

Both orders were rapidly obeyed; the anchors were cleared, and the sheet hauled aft, amid the

stamping of feet, the crashing of blocks, the whistling of the wind and the gear together.

"La vela mayor—peak the mainsail," was his next order.

"Maledicion!" cried the seamen, for, while they were obeying this command, the lee jib-sheet parted.

With a dreadful oath Trocadero now rushed to the bows, and cried—

"Haul in the weather jib-sheet and the staysail halyards, or it is all over with us, Manuel Moreno!"

A shriek of "Ave Maria purissima!" rose from all, for at that moment there was a crash, as the cutter's keel struck a sunken rock; the tall mast shivered like a fishing-rod; its stays flew out in bights and bends, and the bewilderment of the crew increased.

"Let go the best bower anchor to hold her on."

"Stop! no, no, 'tis useless," cried Trocadero; "the next sea will break her back. A los infernos! quick, men, taut a-peak the mainsail, and clear away the boats."

By this time the doomed cutter was crashing full upon the rocks, her timbers started, her outer and inner sheathing bulged, gaping, and the water pouring into her fast. Lennard rushed below and brought up Dora, who had heard with terror and bewilderment the uproar on deck.

At that moment, as she clung to him in her wild alarm, she seemed far more beautiful than he had ever thought her before; yet her cheek was blanched

now, and looked deadly pale in the cold moonlight; her dark eyes were dilated, and her bright hair was all ruffled out.

"Be calm, I beseech you," he whispered; "there is danger, great danger, my beloved, but——"

"I don't fear it while you are with me, and while your arm protects me, dear, dear Lennard; *mi vida—amor mio!*"

He whispered other words in incoherent haste, to comfort and encourage, but they failed to assure the trembling girl, though, in the fulness of her great love, she felt that death would lose half its bitterness if they shared it together, and in each other's arms.

"A precious mess these here Spanish lubbers have got *us* into," grumbled Kit Kentledge to Lennard; "as for themselves, I don't care a dump if every man-jack o' them go to old Harry."

"Moreno has been wrong in his steering all day, señor," said a Spaniard in Lennard's ear, and with an exulting, but fiendish smile glittering in his black eyes. "The compass worked wild—ha! ha!—that was my doing—*mine!*"

"Yours—how, fellow?"

"I put an iron marlin-spike into the binnacle, so the power of the needle was vitiated," replied the man in whom Lennard now recognized Miguel Galvez, the seaman who had been so lately beaten with brass-knuckles. "Señor Inglese, I heard him propose to land on an islet in the Gulf, to have some frolics with the Spanish

lady and her maid, and to leave you there marooned—ashore, but to starve and die—that was the Señor Saavedra's suggestion yesterday. Demonio! but to be wrecked thus is more than any of them bargained for," added the fellow, with a horrible laugh, while they could actually feel the vessel going to pieces under their feet.

The hull lifted a little at first, and then heeled over to starboard, as the rocks pierced her like mighty teeth, and the sea began to break over the deck.

"Stand by me, Kentledge, till we can get the lady ashore," cried Lennard, embracing Dora with one arm, and half lifting her as the water flowed over her ankles.

"The island is close beyond the reef, sir—one might chuck a biscuit on it; but the water between is deep, and still, apparently: let us try for the long-boat."

But a fierce exclamation of anger and contempt escaped Kentledge, as the Spanish seamen, in getting the boat off its chocks over the main-hatch, let it slip through their hands, just as a sea struck the wreck amidships, and away it went, crashing through the bulwarks to leeward, where it was swamped under the cutter's counter, and three or four of the crew were washed away with it.

Lennard kept Dora's face turned away, lest she might see these poor drowning creatures disappear in succession, after futile struggles, amid the

tumultuous breakers that boiled and roared over the black ridge of the reef.

"Lower away the quarter boat—stand by the fall-tackles!" cried Moreno, and with the sailor-like assistance and the strong hands of Kit Kentledge it was lowered and brought safely under the lee quarter with one seaman and the Señor Saavedra in her—for fear endued that little personage with a wonderful amount of tact and activity.

"Now," cried Trocadero, "the Señora first."

And with a sob in his throat and a prayer in his heart, Lennard assisted her over the side, and saw her safe in the tossing boat below.

"Now, sir," cried Kentledge, "follow—drop in quick!"

But Trocadero thrust him back furiously with the muzzle of a cocked pistol, crying,—

"Maldita! back I say, and let your betters into the boat first—back or I'll put a brace of bullets into your skull; such ballast has sent many a better man to his last bed in these waters. Hand over the girl, Jacinta—presto, hombres!"

Moreno handed her over the side and she lightly dropped into the boat, where now some five or six of the crew were seated. The captain was about to follow, when a blow from behind—a dreadful stroke from a handspike, and dealt doubtless by Miguel Galvez, tumbled him into the sea, to rise no more.

"Lennard—Lennard!" cried Dora in imploring accents as she started up in the boat, but was

instantly dragged down by a man whose arm was round her.

Lennard was about to get over the gunnel, when he was again thrust back by the pistol of Trocadero, who said with a grin of intense malignity, and a hiss in his voice,—

“You took some interest once about wrecks in the Bahama Channel—par dios! How do you like one in the Gulf of Mexico?”

The thrust was so violent that Lennard fell on the wet deck, and when again he reached the gunnel, he found with rage and despair that the boat with the mocking Trocadero, the screaming Dora, the girl Jacinta, and some six or seven others, had shoved off.

He saw nothing of Kentledge, and found himself alone on the wreck, which was going fast to pieces!

“A la rocas! to the rocks—the shore!” he heard the voice of Trocadero crying as the men bent to their oars, and the boat vanished from his sight, in wreck, mist, and obscurity, as clouds veiled the moon; and with a wild shout, in which grief, and hope, and terror mingled, Lennard cast off his cap and cloak, dropped from the bowsprit of the cutter—the point of her that lay farthest beyond the reef, and where the water was smooth—and then he struck out for the island.

Fortunately he could swim well and the distance was short, but he felt the long, wavy, and slimy reeds or trailers that grow among the sea rocks in

tropical regions—at times a hundred feet in length—twining round his limbs and impeding his exertions, while the fear of ground sharks chilled the marrow in his bones.

But he prayed to heaven that he might be spared to reach the shore, the island to which Dora had been taken, and by the unscrupulous Trocadero.

CHAPTER XVI.

DORA ON THE ISLAND.

STEERED by Trocadero, the boat, which seemed to vanish from Lennard's sight, rounded a little promontory, and entered a patch of deep and smooth water, on each side of which rose dark rocks, some ten or fifteen feet in height. A gleam of moonshine revealed a kind of sandy creek, into which he carefully ran the boat, and beached her.

Leaping ashore, he desired the others to follow him. Dora was the last who quitted the boat, which the wary Trocadero ordered at once to be pulled up high and dry on the sand, to prevent its being floated off; for this boat might yet be their only means of succour or escape.

Like all impulsive women, Dora soon expended her strength in cries and tears for Lennard, and in reproaching with scorn and bitterness Trocadero, Saavedra, and every man in succession for abandoning him to his fate; and now, when lifted from the boat, she was so overcome by the whole events of the night, that sobs of anguish were all she could

utter, as she was half led and half supported by Saavedra and Jacinta a little way inland from the beach, for now the sound of the sea, as it chafed on the rocks, distressed her keenly by the association of ideas.

“Lennard drowned — Lennard lost — lost for ever !” she continued to moan, for now in her deep sorrow she made no secret of her love for him and kissed again and again the ring he had placed on her finger. This emotion won her some sympathy from Jacinta, till the damsel grew weary of it; but none whatever from Señor Saavedra. In one way he did not regret the loss of Lennard as a lover — indeed, in this instance he felt grateful to the evil genius who brought about the accident; but in another, he certainly missed alike the presence of Lennard and of Kentledge, who as civilized and resolute men, might have defended Dora and himself from any insults to which Trocadero and the survivors of the crew might subject them; for he knew these men to be utterly lawless, and that the islet on which they had landed, like others in the Gulf of Mexico, was doubtless totally uninhabited.

The six survivors of the crew were now in vehement dispute as to whether the scene of their misadventure were the isle of Vermeja, or the Arenas; perhaps it might prove the shoals and rocks known as the Triangles; and Trocadero, though he knew pretty well every key and reef in the Gulf, was unable to solve the difficulty. One fact he was assured of, they had not been wrecked

among the Alicranes (which are three islets, Perez, Chica, and Pajaro, connected by a dangerous shoal), as they lay too near the coast of Yucatan.

Break of day enabled them to perceive that the locality consisted of two islands, with a strip of deep water between them. One was high and rocky, and that on which they found themselves was about two miles in circumference, flat, and covered by rich herbage and trees. The sweet pea and the myrtle-leaved vine grew in sheltered spots, and the nightly-blooming cereus sprung from clefts and fissures on the rocks. A few palms and plain-tains afforded shelter for the birds, and the whole isle was matted by a jungle of verdure, creepers, wild tobacco, the jenequen plant (of which coarse thread is made in Yucatan), pepper, and gourds, from amid which came the hum of insect life as the dawn drew on and the sun rose above the sea; and then many a huge tortoise was seen crawling on the white sand in the little creeks and inlets.

Señor Saavedra repeatedly wrung his hands, as he thought of the lost luxuries and ease to which he was accustomed, but might never more enjoy, and of the wealth he had amassed by long years of industry and successful speculation, but which would now, perhaps, go to the enrichment of others. He heard with terror the proposals of the crew, who were by no means satisfied with the extent of the island prison on which they had been cast. Miguel Galvez urged that they should victual the boat with gourds, pumpkins, and tortoises, and

anything they might recover from the wreck, and then put to sea, if no sail appeared within twenty-four hours.

They were without a compass; but a seaman, who was a Yucataco, declared that he could steer them towards his native peninsula by the stars; "but then our boat is so small," he added, "and we are nine."

"The señor and the two girls can be left behind till we could send them succour," replied Galvez.

To put to sea or to remain alike filled the soul of Saavedra with horror, and, while deploring his evil fortune, he entreated the Yucataco, who seemed less rough than his fellows, to form a kind of bower of palm-leaves for Dora, under the shelter of a rock, and there, with Jacinta, she lay down exhausted, heedless and oblivious apparently of those about her, keeping her eyes closed while she moaned and muttered, mingling little ejaculations of love and sorrow with her prayers.

"Oh! Jacinta," said she, in a low voice, "I learned too soon to idolise him; and by the loss of him heaven is now punishing me for my idolatry."

"Caramba!" said the uninterested Jacinta, "what then, señora? There are more men in the world, and you may be happy yet—that is, if we were once out of this horrible island."

"Happy!" resumed Dora, with a torrent of tears; "I have been happy, oh, so happy, with him; and, though past, too surely for ever, the remembrance of that joy is dear."

Jacinta shrugged her shoulders. She did not understand all this. She had seen too many lovers in her time to set much store on one in particular.

Meanwhile the day wore on, and the hot sun of the Tropic of Cancer mounted high overhead. The seamen, after exploring the island—a task soon accomplished—were desired by Trocadero, whose authority over them was tacitly accepted, to seek the vicinity of the wreck and search for food and fuel.

The *débris* that was strewn on the beach afforded both, for the mast, with much of its gear, the shattered longboat, and much of the timber and sheathing, had come ashore, with portions of the cargo, logwood, coils of grass-rope, and so forth; and with these a keg or two of biscuits, beef, and flour, all more or less damaged by immersion.

A spring was found on the island, but its water was brackish almost to bitterness.

Trocadero knew that all these islands in the Gulf of Mexico lay chiefly near the coast of Yucatan, and were so environed by reefs and shoals, that navigators sedulously avoided them; and by stating this, he crushed the hope that lingered in Saavedra's heart of a speedy release.

Incited by the expectation of finding a case of wine or spirits, the survivors of the crew continued to hover near the broken wreck. The body of Manuel Moreno was washed upon the beach, sorely mutilated by a shark's teeth, and interred in the sand without much ceremony, save the investiga-

tion of his pockets. Meanwhile Trocadero remained near the bower formed for Dora, and having ordered Saavedra to ascend a rock at a distance, "and keep a bright look-out till he was wanted" (an order which the señor felt himself constrained to obey, as the captain indicated the said rock by pointing to it with his pistol), and despatching Jacinta to prepare some cakes of the flour and toast them in a fire which Galvez had lighted, he betook himself to the pleasing, but not very progressive, task of attempting to soothe the grief of the young lady, concerning whom he had already formed some very daring schemes.

CHAPTER XVII.

CAPTAIN TROCADERO AS A LOVER.

A BANASTA, or small keg of Leeward Island rum, had come ashore from the wreck, and this had been speedily pierced and its contents distributed among the crew, each of whom had a copious draught of the fiery and potent liquid from the shell of a cleft cocoa-nut. Trocadero had more than enough to make him unusually brutal and reckless, and in this mood he drew near the place where Dora yet reclined, alone and faint, under the shelter of the palm-leaves, abandoned to suffering, fear, and sorrow, and the weakness endured by lack of nourishment.

José Saavedra, in terror of his life being taken, was still hovering aloof, and Jacinta, who had grown weary of her mistress's complaints and sorrow, and who had come in for a fair share of the ruddy contents of the banasta, was now dancing the manolo for the amusement of Miguel Galvez

and others on the sandy beach where the boat lay, and not far from Moreno's new-made grave.

There was much of insolent triumph in the heart and in the eyes of Trocadero as he crept on—for his stealthy and crouching pace seemed to be literally creeping—for he recalled the cool and cutting bearing of the beautiful and high-bred girl during the voyage of the *Golden Dream*, and a strange emotion of fierce and revengeful satisfaction mingled with the bold hardihood of purpose which the desperation of their circumstances inspired. He found her totally in his power, totally and without aid, unless Heaven sent it, for with the idea of the puny little Saavedra the captain did not trouble himself.

He drew near where she had passed the day under the shelter of a rock, over the brow of which many a brilliant trailer and the flowers of the cereus, now opening their petals to the moon, were hanging, and where fine broad and fan-like leaves of the date palm, skilfully adjusted by the Yucataco, drooped over her, forming a graceful and fairy-like little bower, which had parried the hot beams of the tropical sun by day, and now received the falling dew of night.

Dora had dropped asleep, after passing a wretched day, during which she had felt at times calm—but it was the calmness of stupor; at others, the wildest grief and terror, when, with each pulsation of her poor little heart, there seemed to shoot through it the bitterness of years upon years!

The vile hubbub of the tipsy crew, and their voices as they sang round the dancer of the manolo, mingled at times with the murmur of the moonlit sea; but Dora heard them not, and Trocadero, while stooping he gazed upon her, grew suddenly fearful that the facts of her existence and helplessness might be remembered by their shipmates, and that a scene of outrage would then ensue. At the thought of this he ground his strong white teeth, and felt for the butts and locks of the pistols in his sash.

The moon was now shining on the sea, which rippled in silver sheen around that lonely isle.

The little clumps of plaintains and cocoa-trees, with their great clusters of nuts and tufted foliage, stood up in dark outline between the moonlight and the lurker, who, after casting a stealthy glance around him, again turned his dark, glittering eyes on the sleeping girl, who lay so completely at his mercy.

He could admire the delicately-moulded arm, on which the soft, round cheek reposed, with its long lashes wet with oozing tears; the swelling bust, half-woman and half-girl in its development; and all her air of helplessness and sweet perfection; and yet they stirred no kind, or tender, or holy thought in the arid heart of this truculent sea-wolf.

A sound startled him, and the great, coarse hand which he held over her, like a tiger's paw, was withdrawn. What was it?

"Porquerias! it was but the voices of those borachios on the beach; yet if they should come!" he muttered, and felt in his heart that he would rather pistol her in her sleep than see her become the prey of others.

There was somewhat of method and a lucrative view to a future time in the present proceedings and evil promptings in the heart of Trebucio Trocadero.

"If I can make this girl mine—mine by force or fraud, by fair means or foul means—her father, who is so rich, may think it the most reputable alternative to leave her with me altogether. What if she should marry me to mend an ugly story? There are worse dry docks wherein to repair damages than the church of San Juan at Vera Cruz! Trocadero, courage—courage, amigo mio; there are doubloons in sacksful awaiting you in yonder villa near Orizaba, if, demonio, you ever get there."

In another moment Dora was rudely awakened from her slumber, and a half-stifled cry of terror escaped her, half-stifled by the rough, coarse, and impure kiss of Trocadero, in whose strong grasp she found herself!

Then the extremity of terror endued her with unnatural strength, for she contrived nimbly to elude his grasp and spring to her feet; but, intercepting flight, he still kept her between himself and the face of the rock, at the base of which the palm-

leaves were now trod flat, and the girl appeared in all her defiant beauty, her cheek flushing, her eyes sparkling, and her hair, like masses of golden thread, dishevelled in the full blaze of the moonlight.

"Stand back, insolent wretch!" she exclaimed, her figure seeming to dilate, while every fibre trembled with rage. "How dare you, señor?"

"Dare, did you say, señora?"

"Have you mistaken me for the girl, Jacinta?"

"Par Dios, I have not," replied Trocadero, rubbing his coarse hands with tipsy glee.

"Have you forgotten that I am a lady——"

"Whom I have in my power to make or to mar—to preserve next my heart, or smash like a clay gallipot. A lady? Demonio, I wouldn't give the value of a burnt castagno for the price of your ladyship, here as I have you now in this isle of the devil knows what, in the Gulf of Mexico! Come, señora, don't be a fool; make a friend, a lover of the only man that can protect you," he continued, trying again to grasp her; but she skilfully eluded him. "Don't quarrel," he added, assuming the persuasive; "pray don't, nina de mi alma—angel mio, let us kiss and be friends."

"Oh that I had a pistol!" moaned Dora, in a husky voice, while her little white hands were clenched tightly and spasmodically.

"Such a little spitfire it is! A pistol, indeed!

I shouldn't like you to cover me with such an implement in your present mood, my pretty one."

They stood for a moment surveying each other.

The eyes of the ruffian were expressive only of tipsy ardour and a hideous spirit of love-making—a pitiless joy that a girl of great beauty was completely in his power, where neither pride nor position could avail her.

She, on the other hand, inspired by an utter horror—a terrible sense of the truth that she was at this man's mercy; that Jacinta had mockingly left her; that she was to become the victim of him, and, it might be, of his fellows; so her trembling heart forgot to beat, and a mortal paleness overspread her features.

She knew that the insolence of a gentleman, inflamed by wine, might be quelled by a glance; but here, nor words, nor prayers, nor strength might avail her; and yet, with a painful sob in her throat, she gave up an unuttered petition for succour to God and our Lady of Guadeloupe!

To a man like Trocadero, who considered purity a sham, virtue a chimera, and proper pride but the insolence of fortuitous position, Donna Dora's intense fear and abhorrence, which replaced her first emotion of fiery indignation, served but to provoke and inflame him, and with a muttered imprecation, he resolutely grasped her again.

She cast a glance of wild despair at the sea,

glittering like silver in the moonlight beyond the clump of palms. Could she but reach it—Lennard was there! Then her thoughts flashed home; her father on whom she doted, and who doted on her as the last of his family—who was looking lovingly forward to a reunion with her, after a separation that had seemed so long—was she never indeed to see his face again?

“Compose yourself, *mi vida*,” said Trocadero in a coaxing voice, as she writhed in his powerful hands, while he spoke through his teeth, for his ferocious temper was rising fast; “compose yourself, and don’t bring those drunken devils upon us from yonder beach. Remember only this—and think over it, if you *can* think at all—that you are in my power absolutely and wholly, and that none other can save you.”

“O Madre de Dios!—O blessed Heavens above me!—for what am I reserved?” implored the shuddering girl. “Mercy—mercy, Señor Trocadero—as you hope for mercy!”

“Mercy where and when? Pho!”

“At the hour of death—at the last day!”

“To struggle thus is childish. What, you will bite me, will you, wasp? If you do, *par cielo y fuego infernal*, I’ll give you a knock on the head with my clenched hand that shall keep you quiet enough for a time!”

A wailing cry of despair escaped Dora, who was sinking on her knees, for the great and

muscular hand of Trocadero was clenched for his atrocious purpose ; but ere he could uplift it, he was struck to the earth by a terrible blow—felled literally like a bullock,—and the now half fainting Donna Dora, found herself in the grasp of—another !

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ARENAS.

AS Lennard had swum on beyond the reef, he heard a tremendous crash behind, and knew that it was the fall of the mast and the total breaking up of the *Gaviota*; when he was able to look round, every vestige of her had disappeared, or was floating about as splintered driftwood, tossed in the eddies near the reef.

He swam doggedly and sturdily on for some fifty yards, and found himself under an impending rock, up the slippery face of which he sought in vain to climb, but, after every effort, fell back panting and breathless into deep water.

Then for the first time did a horror of being drowned chill his heart, for he knew all that Dora might suffer on the island; thirst and hunger, heat and cold, exposure to the elements, and more than all these, to insult, for she was in the power of lawless men. For himself he might land only to perish by the hands of Trocadero or others, being alone and totally unarmed; but existence was dear,

and struggling to save it, he swam a little to the left and found himself washed by the surf upon a shelf of flat rock.

He had scarcely attained this place of temporary safety, when a pale and phosphorescent light shot past under the surface of the water he had just quitted, and his blood curdled, for he knew that it was emitted by the shining scales of a white shark, the largest and most voracious of all its species, the dread of sailors in all warm climates, for they dart at a man in the water "as a gudgeon darts at a worm."

Above Lennard the rock rose perpendicularly; he had no means of climbing it, and for more than an hour made futile attempts to do so ere he desisted, and still wet and dripping after his immersion, with an emotion very much akin to despair in his heart, he sat down on the shelf of rock to think over his situation.

The tide was ebbing, for the water had ceased to overflow it; but when it turned, how high might the water rise?

High enough to wash him off; high enough to place him within the reach of some devouring shark perhaps, and certainly he had no desire to perish like Bryan in the ballad of Perene. Then he had a natural horror of being drowned, for ere he reached that shelf of rock he had twice, as he sunk, heard the roar of water rushing in his ears, with that strange sound which the half-drowned describe as being like the ringing of church bells, and he

shuddered as he recalled the soothing but terrible sensation of the ocean closing over him !

Again he made a frantic effort to climb, and again he sank down exhausted. Then he thought of swimming off to some other point of the isle, but those white lines of wavering light that shot to and fro under the water were more than sufficient to appal and deter him.

“Was there ever a poor devil so unfortunate, so ill-fated as I? And but for that scoundrel Trocadero,” he thought, “I should now have been safe in the boat !”

And there was Dora ! How was he to rejoin, to reach and aid her ? How to acquaint her that he still lived, and so save her from those pangs which he knew she must suffer. Lived ! But what a death might he die, if those who survived of the crew sailed away in the boat, or boats—he knew not the number of either—and left him on that shelf of rock, exposed to hunger and thirst, to the chill dews of night and the fierce tropical sun by day, till in madness and despair he should plunge into the sea and anticipate his doom !

These and many more such wild and terrible thoughts—anticipations such as tormented him when lost in the coal-mine—coursed through his mind now, for he possessed an acute and powerful imagination, and so possessed the ample means of tormenting himself.

He could but hope that daylight might reveal some prospect of relief, some means by which to

ascend from his present place ; thus he had no resource but to wait and watch the return of the tide, which fortunately was not a high one, and when full barely rippled against the edge of the rock on which he sat.

So, with his mind tormented by anxiety for Dora's safety and his own escape, he had to endure the long, long hours of the silent night till they passed away, and then watch the beams of the sun, as, with tropical swiftness, they shot upward in fiery lines upon the sky, radiating from the horizon, and after a time, from thence a broad and wondrous pathway of brilliance shone along the water to the rocks of the island. The waves lifted their blue tops in golden light, and the surf that curled over the reef sparkled like showers of diamonds and prisms of every rainbow hue.

But not a sail was visible on the vast expanse of sea ; and, from the point where Lennard sat, the rocks of the isle seemed to recede, so it became evident that he was perched, most tantalizingly, on a kind of promontory.

From the brow of the cliff above his head, some long green tendrils or trailers grew downward ; but, even could he have reached them, they were too feeble to have borne his weight in any attempt to climb.

He now resorted to shouting again and again. Some wild birds flew out of their nests in the rocks and wheeled in circles about him ; but his cries met with no other response. The morning sun was hot—

oppressively so; after the night he had passed, Lennard's throat was parched with thirst, which he was totally without the means of allaying, so he now began to endure the *first* instalment of the horrors he had pictured or anticipated last night.

Again he shouted wildly and hoarsely; and this time his heart gave a bound, for he heard an undoubted reply!

"Holloa, below there!" cried a familiar voice above him; "is it you, Mr. Blair, who sings out?"

"Kentledge, Kentledge, assist me, for Heaven's sake, if you can!" exclaimed Lennard, who with joy recognized the voice of the boatswain; and immediately the brown, sunburned face and curly hair of that personage were visible at the edge of the cliff above, as he peered cautiously over, and evidently lay flat on his breast, to save himself from falling into the sea.

"I thought, sir, you had gone off in the boat with them Spanish warmint, and had left *me*; now I finds as we're both marooned together."

"How did you escape, Kit?"

"I swam off when the cutter began to go to pieces, for I saw they were squabbling, knife in hand, about getting into the dingy."

"And I was knocked down and left on board by Trocadero to drown, while they shoved off. Where are the crew and where is the young lady?"

"All that is more than I can tell you, sir. I got a knock on the head as the waves cast me on

the shore, and, feeling worn and sleepy, not having closed an eye for nearly thirty-six hours, I took a snooze up here on some soft grass, till the sunshine and your shouts awoke me ; and here I am ! ”

“ Help me if you can, Kit, like a good fellow. ”

“ That would I do readily if I had a few fathoms of line and a purchase-block ; but—— ”

“ Have you a knife ? ”

“ Of course, sir, here is my jack-knife. ”

“ Cut some of these trailers and make a rope ; twist them up somehow ; and if you’ll lend me a hand I’ll risk the attempt to climb. I can but fall into the sea. ”

“ Don’t think o’ that, sir ; it is swarming with white sharks ; and some nibbles they’ve had o’ them Spaniards that went to leeward with the long boat, have whetted their appetites uncommon ! ”

Kentledge, like every seaman, was fertile in expedients. Near the brow of the rock grew a wild vine, which was firmly rooted in the soil, and two of the long, tough green tendrils of this he spliced together, using his black silk necktie and the sleeves of his shirt as lashings, and this improvised rope he lowered over to Lennard, assuring him that the branches would never part, and that he must hold on fearlessly.

The preparation of this means for relieving Lennard proved somewhat protracted, so noon was almost nigh ere it was finished. Then by clinging to it with his hands and pressing his knees against the face of the rock, which was some twenty feet

in height, panting, yet fearing almost to breathe, lest the vine should part and precipitate him into the sea below, Lennard slowly and laboriously reached the grassy plateau, where the strong hands of Kit Kentledge grasped his, and he found himself in safety.

He looked pale and haggard, and his eyes were wild and bloodshot. His lips were baked and cracked, and he presented a remarkable contrast to the more hardy Kit Kentledge, who after his past peril had slept soundly during the night, and now that day had come, was prepared to look about him, and to take with equal equanimity the best or the worst that fate had in store for him.

Again Lennard repeated a question he had asked often and with irrepressible anxiety during the preparations for his release, whether Kentledge was certain that he had not seen or heard of Donna Dora or the boat's crew, but only to receive the same answer,—that he was in total ignorance of their movements, and had never left that part of the isle on which he landed, but now they should explore it together.

We have said that the scene of the *Gaviota's* wreck consisted of two islands; one was flat and fertile, the other high and rocky. Lennard and Kentledge were together on the latter, and a stripe of deep water lay between them and the former.

The rocky island was almost circular, more than two miles in diameter; and Kentledge, who knew those seas well, averred them both to be called the Arenas.

“ See, Mr. Blair—look there away to the nor’ard.”

The smoke of a steamer was visible rising above the horizon ; but she was more than “hull down,” for the long and vapoury streak from her funnel alone indicated her locality, and the two lonely men looked long and wistfully, till the thinnest traces of it melted away.

Wild verdure covered the island, forming a thick and matted jungle that grew close even to the shore, along which they proceeded slowly and leisurely, being seriously impeded at every pace, sinking now mid-leg deep, and anon almost to the waist, among twisted trailers, decaying gourds, and giant leaves, from under which the mosquitos and other insects rose in black and humming clouds, while the sun’s rays became so overpowering, especially as they were both minus hats, that they had frequently to make long and breathless pauses in their progress.

They found a spring gurgling deep under this luxuriant jungle, and the draughts it afforded were so cool and delicious that they returned to it again and again.

Slowly thus they made their way round a portion of the isle without seeing a trace of the wreck, or of their companions, and no sail was visible on the sea. They holloed singly and together, but no voice responded. The utmost silence reigned around them, and there was no sound in the air but the murmur of the surf, blending with the

dreamy hum of insect life. Lennard began to fear that Trocadero had put off in the boat and left the spot for ever.

In his impatience of this slow mode of literally tearing a passage for themselves round the shore of the isle, Lennard suggested that they should ascend its highest point, and take a more extended view around them; so, making their way, but with still greater difficulty, for in some places they had to climb masses of jungle-covered rock, in others the branches of falling trees, yet growing in the earth and forming a kind of natural abatis, impeded them, they reached the apex of the highest cliff, and then saw below, the vast expanse of open sea, the whole of the isle, and the other, which we have just described as being so flat and green, with its clumps of cocoa and plaintain trees.

They also saw the deep blue water that lay between them and the figures of men moving about in the creek, where the boat had been beached by order of Trocadero.

"There they are, thank God!" cried Lennard.

"Yes, with the dingy high and dry on the sand; a sign of their being in no hurry for sea," said Kentledge.

"But where may Dora be?" thought Lennard, as they proceeded at once to make their way down and towards the nearest point, that they might hail the crew to launch the boat and bring them off. But, as before, so impeded was their progress—their feet being entangled like those of one oppressed by

a nightmare—so weary and faint had Lennard become that night had well-nigh closed in ere they found themselves at the verge of the stripe of water separating the islands.

Their approach seemed to have been quite unperceived by the Spaniards, to whom the discovery of the *banasta* had proved a source of extreme gratification, and thus amid the songs and uproar of Miguel Galvez and his shipmates, the shouts of Lennard, in Spanish, and the anathemas of Kentledge, in English, were unheeded and unnoticed, though they were only about a quarter of a mile distant.

So evening deepened fast into a night of tropical splendour. The murmur of the sea came in soft and measured cadence to the ear, and the tints of its waters were varied in the moonlight. In one place the wavelets rose and fell like liquid gold, but when they broke over the reef, their white foam shone like silver, and where the ocean stretched away into the vastness of the Gulf, it was all of the deepest blue, reflecting the depth and brilliance of the starry sky.

Yonder—half a musket-shot distant—Lennard could see the red glare of a fire, which burned brightly, being fed by pieces of the wreck. Around it rang the choruses of the now drunken seamen in their orgie, and close by them, from time to time, a girl in the shortest of skirts danced the Mexican manolo.

That she was Jacinta, the girl from Campeaché,

neither Lennard nor Kentledge could doubt, but where was Donna Dora ?

"These drunken madmen have evidently procured spirits from the wreck, and do not heed us, Kentledge," said Lennard.

"They're having a jolly spree, sir ; but I have great fears for the young lady among that 'ere coloured lot. I never liked sailors with rings in their ears."

On hearing his own anxieties so palpably expressed, Lennard could no longer contain himself.

"You speak my very thoughts, Kentledge," said Lennard, impetuously ; "I shall swim over, whatever the risk may be."

"So shall I, sir ; we may bawl here all night till we're hoarse without being attended to, and if heard, perhaps they might only laugh at us, or swamp the boat if they tried to launch her."

"The water is full of sharks, Kentledge ; let us not both cast away life. If I can get over I'll come back with the boat for you."

"The sharks will be all about the reef and the back-bone of the wreck ; they'll find some attractions there, such as beef-tubs, bread-bags, and turtles, and perhaps the lubberly Jack-Spaniards as were washed over with the long-boat. Let us cross higher up—and here goes !"

Kentledge tightened by a hole or two the strap or belt which girt his loose and now somewhat tattered inexpressibles, prior to plunging in.

The attempt was full of deadly peril ; but what

mattered that to Lennard, if Dora's safety required him to face it? Besides, to some natures, especially to such a spirit as his, danger, action and fierce activity, at such a time were an escape—a welcome relief—from maddening thought.

Poor Kit Kentledge, now that he had lost the papers which Captain Maynard was despatching to Tampico, had nothing in particular to save, but felt himself bound to follow Lennard, and rejoin the Spaniards, though he knew them to be a graceless set.

“If I fail in crossing, Kit,—if aught happens to me, and you escape, you'll stand by that Spanish girl while life lasts?” cried Lennard.

“With God's help I shall, sir!” replied Kentledge, as they selected a point distant from the scene of the wreck, and plunged in.

Though neither were quite fearless of the chances against them—of the sharks around, the surf between, and the slippery rocks opposite,—they swam boldly and sturdily over, and landed without a scratch or bruise on the opposite island, where they grasped each other's hands in hearty congratulation, as they stood dripping on the shore.

CHAPTER XIX.

“NEUSTRA SEÑORA DEL GUADALOUPE.”

INFLAMED by the potent aguardiente, after hours of long fasting, the tipsy crew were now making such a noise—seeming to be engaged in an angry brawl or general *mêlée*—that Lennard and his companion found the necessity, unarmed as they were, of approaching with circumspection.

They could perceive Manuel Galvez, the Yucataco, and four others quarrelling, and all having their knives drawn, as the blades glittered alternately in the red rays of the fire and the silver light of the moon, which cast the shadows of the group far along the white sand. Jacinta was regarding them with terror, shrinking in the background, with a pale face, and a hand upon her lips, as if to repress a rising shriek.

Three of the party were absent ; Donna Dora, Trocadero, and Saavedra ! Where were they, and how situated, was the first thought of Lennard's heart.

As he turned away, a nervous clutch was laid upon his arm.

“Señor Saavedra!” he exclaimed, on seeing the poor little man, whom he should scarcely have recognized but for his immense curled moustaches, so woebegone, so utterly miserable did he now seem, and so tattered in costume,—“where is she?—where is Donna Dora?”

“Yonder señor—yonder; we may yet be in time to save her.”

“Save her from what—the sea?”

“From one as pitiless—but, oh! señores——”

“Speak quickly!” cried Lennard furiously.

Agonized by thirst, and ashamed of his own weakness and terror, Saavedra could barely gasp—

“Trocadero, pistol in hand, warned me off to a distance, on pain of death——”

“And she is now with him—alone?” exclaimed Lennard, with a spasm of terror in his heart.

“Alone, señores, alone! I have neither strength nor weapon—he has both,” replied Saavedra, wringing his hands. “Save her, if you can; she is the only daughter of a dear, dear friend—my little Dora Dominga!”

The voice of the Spaniard was very mournful, and Lennard felt at that moment that his care of and regard for his god-daughter covered a multitude of the annoyances to which he had subjected her lover.

“The scoundrel,” said Lennard, in a low voice of concentrated passion. “I’ll kill him, as I would a viper!”

“Now to have a shy at old Pumpbolt,” added

Kentledge, clenching his hands ; while Lennard, arming himself with a billet of wood—some fragment of the wreck which lay near—hurried at once in the direction indicated by Saavedra—the trees near the rock ; and the fact of his arrival at a critical time was put beyond all doubt by the pitiful supplications of the sinking girl for mercy ; as for aid, she expected none.

Just as she was about to kneel before the pitiless Trocadero, that personage was struck to the earth as if by a cannon ball, and Dora, with a strange cry, in which joy and terror mingled, fell into the arms of Lennard Blair.

Then, after a time, as he raised her head and pressed her to his breast, assuring her that she was safe, and that he too was safe, thrilling indeed was the glance of her sweet dark eyes, and divine was the smile which spread over her minutely cut little face and sensitive mouth, when she became fully conscious of who was her protector.

For a time their mutual expressions were all mere incoherence, while the practical Kit Kentledge, ignoring them, turned his attention to Trocadero, who lay snorting at their feet, with his dark and coarse face deluged in blood.

“He’s a-blowing like a sparmicitty, he is!” said the boatswain, as he quietly turned him over with his foot. “The old Spanish warmint, he should have gone from the yardarm to the devil long ere this time.”

“He ought to be shot outright, like a wild

beast," said Lennard, with a glow of returning anger.

"Not by you, sir, anyways," said Kentledge. "He ain't very moral, I've no doubt; but remember how much one's constitootion has to do with that commodity as the parsons calls morality," added this sea philosopher, as he kicked Trocadero over again on his back, and took from his sash a pair of pistols and a small bag of caps and ball-cartridges. "Now, old Mosquito, the sting is out of you, and here's to make you all fast and comfortable."

Then, trundling Trocadero out of the long worsted sash which girt his waist, Kentledge therewith made fast his arms behind, and left him thus to come to his senses at leisure.

The dew found in the hollows of some large leaves, proved the means of assuaging the thirst of Dora and her two friends; a tortoise roasted by Kentledge in its shell, and one of Jacinta's ill-flavoured and indifferently toasted cakes formed a repast, over which they related all that had passed during the twenty-four hours' separation; and then they spoke of the chances of ultimate release.

Amid this Jacinta came, in tears and terror, to announce that, in a fit of jealousy concerning her, the crew were slaughtering each other at the creek; and now she crouched down at Dora's feet, hiding her face in her skirts.

Leaving Dora with Saavedra and her attendant,

Lennard and the boatswain hurried away, anxious to save human life if they could do so. But when they reached the creek, the bright light of the moon revealed a very startling spectacle. Two gachupins, or Mexican Spaniards, tall, sombre, and muscular men, with rings in their ears—one having his head girt by a gaudy handkerchief, while the other had his coal-black hair gathered in a red silk net—lay there dead, their broad, bare breasts gashed with several wounds, and their hands yet grasping those odious knives, which few seamen of any country are now without. One man lay partly in the water, which came rippling in silver wavelets on the white sand of the creek.

Near the boat, the embers of the now neglected fire reddened and faded out, to redden again under the breath of the passing breeze; the empty banasta, the evil contents of which had brought these crimes about, the bones and shells of some roasted tortoises and other débris lay near, and snorting in their tipsy slumber, with visages pale, and lips parted and black, lay the four survivors of the crew of the *Gaviota*, on a bank which was covered by the blossoms of the sweet-pea growing wild.

"Take their knives away, Kit—from the dead as well as the living,—and cast them into the sea," said Lennard.

Kentledge speedily did so, and, leaving the four men to sleep off the fumes of their orgie under the baleful tropical dew, Lennard and he returned to where Jacinta was once more making a species of

bower for her mistress and herself of the great palm-leaves.

On consciousness returning to Trocadero, he alternately uttered dreadful threats and pitiful entreaties to be released from his bonds; urging that, if they ever reached Vera Cruz, he would complain of his maltreatment to the Corregidor, and the Alcaldes Ordinarios; but Lennard bade the ruffian to remember how he had left him to perish on the wreck—how he had struck him twice with his pistol, and of his more recent insolence to Donna Dora, adding that he should be thankful that life was spared him.

Then the baffled Trocadero howled like a wild animal, and gnashed his teeth in the impotence of his fury, but after a time he became silent and sullen, and betook him to brooding, no doubt, on some terrible vengeance.

While Dora and her attendant slept, Lennard and Kentledge, with Saavedra, sought a temporary shelter from the dew under the branches of a stunted plaintain-tree, and conned wearily over their plans for the future—the probability of a vessel coming in sight, and the means for hailing or signalling her; how, if the boat were stocked with fruit, tortoises, and the banasta filled with pure water from the spring on the other isle, they might put to sea, and by constant rowing reach the coast of Yucatan.

But they were without a compass, without sails or covering, and when Lennard thought of the

delicate and gently nurtured Dora in an open boat upon the sea, with four of the crew such Spaniards as those of the *Gaviota*, he shuddered. And then there was Trebucio Trocadero; he could neither be taken on such a desperate expedition, nor left to perish alone on the island.

Lennard grew weary of sad conjectures, and, overcome by all he had undergone, dropped into slumber.

How long it lasted he knew not; but he had, many painful and uneasy dreams, with shadowy memories of the horrors he had endured in the coal-mine, blended with episodes of the wreck in chaotic confusion; and again he seemed to hear the voice of Hesbia Vere as in their last interview, and he felt his heart stirred painfully, though Hesbia was nothing to him now.

A ship had come, he thought, and Dora was being borne off to her in the arms of Trocadero, whose dark face wore an expression of ferocious triumph. Imploring help, Dora's eyes, and face, and hands were all turned to Lennard, who sought in vain to follow her, for his limbs had become powerless, his feet seemed to adhere to the earth, to sink deep in the sand or the masses of jungle that rose around him. It was hideous nightmare—he strove to cry out, but the sound died unuttered on his lips.

The whole situation and scene seemed to be horribly and palpably before him—the vessel, a large steamer like the *Golden Dream*, lay with her

broadside to the island ; the blue waves were rolling in the sunlight around her ; the smoke was pouring in black volume from her red funnel, and there was in his ear the fierce angry sound of the snow-white steam blowing off.

He started up as the cheerful voice of Kit Kentledge broke the spell ; but the sound was still in his drowsy ears, and there, beyond all doubt, within a quarter of a mile from the island, was a large screw-steamer—the vessel of his dream—lying to, with her mainsail thrown in the wind’s eye, while one of her boats was being pulled fast inshore ; for Kentledge, who had been on the look out since early dawn, had, as she drew near, made such signals from an eminence as could not fail to attract the watch on deck—so they were all to be saved ere the more serious portion of their sufferings had begun.

The vessel proved to be the *Neustra Señora del Guadalupe*, from Cuba, bound to Tampico, *viâ* Vera Cruz ; so in one hour from the time of his dream, Lennard had the joy of seeing Dora safe amid the comforts of the lady’s cabin, and Trocadero tied with a rope in the cable-tier below, there to remain until he was handed over to the Spanish authorities.

Kit Kentledge would have liked a pot of beer after all his troubles, but was compelled to take rum-grog dashed with Angostura bitters, the rich pink colour of which he greatly admired.

Saavedra solacing himself with a cigar on the

poop, was again pulling his long moustaches, making the most of his little figure, and treating Lennard as before, with coolness and hauteur ; but our hero cared little for either.

He had been in time last night, after a great peril, to save her he loved, and who loved him dearly ; and though another twenty-four hours might—as his heart foreboded—see them parted, perhaps for ever, the memory of all that had passed and of all they had endured together since the sailing of the *Golden Dream* would never be forgotten ; and thus full of his own thoughts he watched the rocks of the Arenas fading into the yellow morning haze astern, while the large and stately Spanish vessel steamed on her western course—

“O'er the deep, o'er the deep,
Where the whale, and the shark, and the sword-fish
sleep ;
Where outflying the mist and the driving rain,
The petrel telleth her tale in vain.”

CHAPTER XX.

SEPARATION.

NEXT morning beheld the mighty outline of Orizaba, a snow-capped volcano which is more than a thousand feet higher than the Peak of Teneriffe, rising from the sea, and ere long the lesser cone of Tuxtla, which is four miles from Vera Cruz, was seen to send its puffs of steam-like vapour into the cloudless sky. These and other peaks were visible long before the rest of the coast rose above the pale horizon.

"Ah, Orizaba once more, and the little Tuxtla, too!" exclaimed Donna Dora, with that joyous and hearty ring in her voice which was so attractive, and might make any man swear she was a true, brave, and loving girl; "I greet you again, my own dear hills!"

And playfully she kissed her pretty fingers to the distant mountain peaks.

"I know the very place where our villa looks down on the green savannah, but we are too far off yet to see even its woods and plantations."

"The outline of the land alone is visible,

señora," said Saavedra, with a frown ; " but with a powerful telescope one might perhaps make out the great mass of the castle of San Juan."

"In sight of home already, and at *this time* yesterday we were on that desert isle," said Dora, pursuing her own thoughts, as her eyes met those of Lennard in a mutual glance that conveyed a volume, for though she spoke much, and in her quick and rapid little way was pointing out and describing the various features of her native coast as they increased in size and distinctness, he was somewhat silent and sad, in the fear that he was hearing her voice, so beloved, for the last time perhaps.

He had heard so much of the wealth of Donna Dora's father—a merchant prince in the land of gold and silver—that he could never hope, as the mere agent and junior partner of the house of Vere & Co., to be acceptable as a suitor ; and then there were Spanish pride of race, difference of religion, and jealousy of strangers to be overcome. These prospects filled him with nervous fears and keen anxiety for the future.

Plans he had none, beyond visions of hard work and energetic attempts to acquire the wealth he coveted, not for his own sake, but that he might feel more near and worthy of her he loved ; yet this acquisition, if ever won, would require time—it might be years. So he was full of thought, while the great steamer drew nearer and nearer the land of his destiny.

Already its violet tints were changing to the greenery of verdure, and its features became more sharp and distinct against the deep and intense blue of the South American sky.

"We shall land this evening, I presume," said Dora, after a long pause.

"To-night," was the curt response of Saavedra.

"You must come immediately and see papa and me at our own home—perhaps he may take you there to-night," said she, with a sweet smile, "when he hears of all our adventures together, for I have no doubt he will come for me with the carriage personally."

"You forget, señora, that he expects you by the *Golden Dream* from England, not by the mail-steamer from Cuba," said Saavedra, coldly.

"Oh, true, amigo mio! of what am I thinking?" said the girl, as her bright face clouded for a moment.

Lennard was regarding her tenderly, and was so full of her presence and of their approaching separation, that he scarcely ever looked at the land they were nearing.

His love for Dora was not based on mere external attractions, though she possessed many; it was an emotion that had grown up rapidly in his heart—an instinct the result of tenderness on his part, of sense and sensibility on hers.

"It must have been passion I felt for the large and full-formed Hesbia; but it is love—pure and gentle love—I feel for Dora," thought he; for the fair-

skinned and golden-haired Spanish girl, with her charming and quaint *espièglerie* of manner, realized all that he had ever dreamed of beauty in his moments of enthusiasm ; and, though neither poet nor painter, he had not been without his day-dreams of a face to love : yet such a face, when found, exists too often in the fancy of the lover only.

Had he never thought thus of another face ? Perhaps. Yet Lennard Blair was blameless.

The sandy shore of Vera Cruz, the great castle of San Juan de Ulloa, the spires and domes of the churches, were all distinctly visible as the sun set in flame beyond the mighty mountain ranges that rise inland. But when the Cuban steamer, with slackened speed, in charge of a pilot and preceded by multitudes of silvery flying fish scared to leap high by the noise of the screw propeller, came into soundings, and slowly passing midway between the reefs of Blanquilla and Panjaros, was opposite the lighthouse and Fort Conception, darkness lay upon the scenery. The city, its walls and redoubts, with the shipping in the bay of Vergara, were lost in obscurity, though a red flush to the westward still threw forward in dark and strong outline the peaks and ridges of the remoter sierras. The sky was without a cloud, and was becoming rapidly studded with silver stars that sparkled amid the blue and crimson.

The land breeze was soft and pleasant, and below Point Hornos it came over the water laden as if with the odour of violets.

Lights here and there shone from casements, and that of the pharos gleamed steadily across the waters of the bay. A confused crowd of many persons could be seen upon the pier or wharf as the steamer drew nearer. There were torches and lanterns, but no gas-lamps. The deep and sonorous shouts in Spanish came clearly over the water, as officials and porters hastened hither and thither, jostling each other; and strange uniforms were seen at times, with the glint of a bayonet, as a sentinel trod to and fro at his post.

Aware that their time for parting had come, when Donna Dora would inevitably be conveyed away by the jealous Saavedra, and when Lennard should have to seek for quarters at some vinta or hotel—friendless, alone, and a stranger in a land of strangers—they remained together hand in hand under the awning on deck, unheeded among the crowd of Cuban passengers, who with all their cloaks and muffings, bag and baggage, were preparing to seize the first moment for escape from their watery prison.

The lovers were totally unencumbered by luggage, as all they possessed was lying with the wreck of the *Gaviota*, and Lennard was so occupied with Dora that he never reflected how little he had in his purse, or on the difficulties he might experience in his dilapidated costume of proving his identity to his cautious business correspondents in Vera Cruz.

A boat came off from the shore, and now the

steamer was boarded by several officials, some of whom were in uniform. The lists of passengers in cabin and steerage were given, and of course mention was duly made, as recorded in the log, of the persons rescued from the island of the wreck; and on the name of Trebucio Trocadero being given, he was ordered up from the cable-tier to be sent to prison ashore; but, lo! the place of that distinguished mariner was vacant, the cords which had bound him were found lying in fragments on the lower deck; for he, assisted by some friend or confederate—by one of the crew of the *Gaviota*, most probably—had escaped by swimming ashore.

During the hubbub caused by this discovery, Lennard and Dora had retired to the now deserted cabin, where they were sitting in silence, and almost in the dark, the thrifty steward having lit but one or two of the lamps. Her right hand and cheek rested on Lennard's shoulder; his left arm was round her caressingly, and her eyes were full of tears, when they were startled by the somewhat brusque entrance of a young man in the picturesque costume peculiar to Mexico; his jacket and breeches, theatrically termed slops, were of rich maroon-coloured velvet, slashed with white silk and braided with silver. He wore a large sombrero decorated with a broad scarlet ribbon, having a deep fringe, also of silver, resting on the left shoulder. In his silk sash of many colours were a knife with a carved ivory hilt, and a silver-mounted Colt's revolver pistol.

After a hasty and imperious glance round the partially darkened cabin, he came at once forward to Dora, who, starting, held forth her hand, with a blush in which more of surprise than pleasure mingled.

"What is this I see, and what is this I hear!" he exclaimed; "my uncle Saavedra and Donna Isidora arriving by the mail-steamer from Cuba?"

"Not from Cuba, Don Ignacio," replied Dora, as he lifted his velvet sombrero and kissed her hand; "but thereby hangs a long story."

Though not jealous by nature, Lennard felt a chill come over now, as if some evil influence was impending here.

"A story of a wreck, my uncle tells me," continued the young man, whose keen eyes were fixed with no pleasant expression on Lennard, for they were flashing as redly as the point of his cigar.

"A story nearly of *three* wrecks," said Saavedra, who now joined them; "for the *Golden Dream* broke her starboard wheel in a pampero; then she sprung a leak off the coast of Yucatan, forcing her into Campeaché; and finally we were cast away among the Arenas."

"Why, señora," said the young Mexican, laughing, "your voyage home has been like that of the *Orinoco*, in which all who did not die became crazy.* And you liked England?"

* Este es el viage del *Orinoco*. Que el que no se murio, se volvio loco.—*Spanish Proverb*.

"I adored it!"

"And surviving all, thank our Lady of Guadalupe, we are now home again," said Saavedra.

"I give you welcome, Donna Dora. You left us but a child; now you are a woman, I dare not say how beautiful; but, after to-morrow, the sun will shine brighter in Vera Cruz."

"You do not speak of my father, amigo mio Ignacio; how is he?" said Dora, uneasily.

"Well and strong."

"He has, then, recovered from the illness which made him hasten my return from Europe?"

"Perfectly, señora; but he is now absent with his Excellency the Governor, at the river of Xampa, and little anticipates the pleasure and surprise that await his return home."

"My beloved papa!"

"But pardon me, señora; *this* gentleman—you do not introduce us."

"Señor Lennard Blair, who saved my life at the Arenas, and to whom I, and your uncle Saavedra, owe a debt of gratitude," said Dora, with a blush and a glance at Lennard, in which the emotion she named was blended with one more tender.

"Yes; par Dios, we have truly been inseparable," was the dubious response of the elder Saavedra, curling up his moustaches, and bestowing a furtive glance upon his nephew, who, instead of bowing to Lennard, started on hearing his name, and gave him a very unmistakable stare, saying—

"Santos; what! you here again?"

"Señor?" queried Lennard.

"One might have thought the atmosphere of Vera Cruz too hot to suit you."

"I do not understand."

"We heard that you had gone to Cuba; but my meaning will shortly be explained."

"I shall tell you of all our adventures elsewhere," resumed Dora, hurriedly, and feeling alike perplexed and uncomfortable by this reception of Lennard by another of her father's friends, this nephew of Saavedra, a pale, unhealthy-looking, and green-skinned lithe and supple little gachupin or Mexican Spaniard, with deep bead-like black eyes, and slender moustaches which seemed, like those described by the late Albert Smith, to be merely eyebrows on the upper lip. Lennard was about to speak again, but after a whispered word or two apart with his uncle, the young man smiled to Dora, and went abruptly on deck.

"Señora," said Saavedra, "the steamer is now close alongside the pier; my nephew Ignacio will procure a carriage for us. Are you prepared to go?"

"Instantly," replied Dora, adjusting a bonnet and cloak with which a lady passenger had supplied her, and the jarring sounds alongside, the escape of the steam overhead, with the increased noise of feet on deck, all served to announce that *Neustra Señora del Guadalupe* was moored hard and fast by the quay at Vera Cruz.

"Follow us, señor," said Saavedra to Lennard, "and we shall see you to a hotel."

Lennard bowed, and muttered his thanks.

Dora took the arm of her padrino, while Lennard followed, and, by the light of torches and lanterns on the deck and quay, found himself gradually approaching the gangway by which he was to reach *terra firma*—to tread the soil of the New World—amid a crowd of motley-looking Mexicans, exhibiting every colour in costume and every hue of complexion, from the darkest type of Africa to the purest European. All had large hats, many of them being ornamented by gaudy ribbons and bead-rolls. Some were minus pantaloons, while others had on two pairs—the outer, of one colour, being slashed up the side, to show the inner, of another and a gayer tint.

Some were splendidly dressed, like Don Ignacio, but many more were in rags; some wore gay striped mantles, others the Mexican *serapé*, a woollen blanket, having a hole for the head to pass through. Some wild-like figures wore the *tilma*, or Indian cloak, and many, particularly the stout negro porters, were naked to the waist; but the air around them all was redolent with tobacco.

After shaking hands with Kit Kentledge, and exchanging mutual assurances of meeting again, Lennard became conscious of having his progress from the ship impeded by two or three persons with whom Don Ignacio paused to converse, and who so systematically intruded themselves between him and those he wished to follow closely, that Dora and Saavedra had already crossed the gangway, and she

was anxiously looking back, before Lennard had reached it.

He had just done so by a rough effort in pushing one of those persons aside, and was about to say a few parting words of thanks, and farewell to the captain of the Cuban steamer, when a hand was laid heavily on his own, and turning, he found himself confronted, and his passage barred by a tall and sombre-looking man in military uniform, who said—

“Señor, I have business with you.”

“Pardon me,” replied Lennard; “I am in haste.”

“Probably—but I am in none, and can share my leisure with you. Remove that gangway, Señor Capitano, and have this person conducted into the cabin. He is my prisoner.”

“Prisoner!” echoed Lennard, confounded by this sudden and new position, and still more so, when he saw a Mexican soldier on each side of him, with shouldered musket and bayonet fixed. He heard the voice of Dora calling to him faintly amid all the hubbub this affair caused among the crowd upon the quay.

“Arrested—Lennard arrested—for what, and by whom?” she demanded, impetuously.

“Par Dios, I don’t know; but I always thought him a rascal,” replied old Saavedra, with glee, as he hurried her out of the gathering mob.

“Dear, dear Lennard—amigo mio—mi querido, this is all some cruel mistake, which papa—would that he were here—shall rectify to-morrow. Adieu

for a little time." She wrung her hands, and wept, as she was almost thrust into a carriage by the two Saavedras and driven off; but not before she had heard the crowd uttering fierce execrations against the English prisoner.

"Lennard arrested!" she continued to repeat, for she was plunged in sorrow and perplexity. Not knowing what to think, she was stunned on hearing the charges which Ignacio Saavedra assured her were made truthfully against the culprit. He had committed various robberies on the highway, forgeries on the bank of Vera Cruz, and had assassinated a wealthy planter. His knife was in possession of the Corregidor, and had his name graven in full upon the handle.

"Dios no quiero that a false accusation should be made," said Señor José; "but he must have been in Mexico before. I suspected that he knew Spanish too well when we met on board the *Golden Dream*."

Dora was still inclined to have the carriage stopped, and some inquiries made, but a horrible lepero, with leering eyes and long lean fingers, ran to the window, crying—

"Caridad, señorita! caridad, por el amor de la Santísima Virgen!"

So they were compelled to drive on.

"Happen what may, any way they are separated now," thought José Saavedra with a grin of satisfaction.

Meanwhile, how fared it with Lennard.

"This is some unaccountable mistake, señor," said he, smiling, but nevertheless excessively annoyed; "and it can, no doubt, be satisfactorily explained by you."

"By *you*, rather; par el Demonio, but we shall see!" replied the officer, who announced himself as Captain Salvador Gonzalez y Llano, of the National Guard, or militia of the province, and before whom Lennard found himself pushed back into the cabin, amid a crowd of wondering seamen and engineers, negro porters, cargadores, and idlers. "Listen—you speak Spanish I find?"

"Yes; but I am an Englishman."

"This document, which I have carried about me for a month, says otherwise," exclaimed the officer.

"How?"

"That you are a Scotsman."

"So I am, señor."

"Demonio, how can you be both? Come, señor, this is no place or time for trifling, and we have means of curing such insolence, both sharp and sure," said the Spaniard, angrily, as he glanced at a document which Lennard was surprised to see looked remarkably like a warrant—being a printed form, the blanks of which were filled in by writing, while an official seal was at the bottom. "Rogues have as many countries as names, and this duplicity but proves your character," added the captain, who was in a decidedly bad humour, his dinner of gaspachos—a mess of bread, vinegar, oil, sliced

onions, and garlic—having seriously disagreed with him.

“I demand by what right you take me into custody, and detain me from my friends?” asked Lennard, now becoming angry.

“I arrest you, Lennard Blair, as a British subject——”

“On what charges?”

“Complicity in robbery, forgery, and murder—these are quite enough, I think.”

“This is too absurd!”

“I hope you may find it so. These crimes were committed in the province of Vera Cruz, before your flight, and my present warrant is from Don Juan, the principal Alcalde Ordinario.”

Matters were now looking decidedly serious!

“You dare not put this indignity upon me; I shall appeal for protection to the British Consul.”

“He fully concurs in our desire that you should be arrested and punished for your crimes.”

“I swear to you, señor, by all that’s sacred, that I have not yet had my foot on South American soil! I have read and heard a good deal about Spanish injustice, corruption, and pig-headedness; but certainly never expected to experience any of them. However, señor, I shall not resist——”

“To do so would be worse than useless.”

“I can only assure you that you are mistaken: that this is the most absurd accusation in the world, and that to-morrow at latest, shall show you who I really am, when my papers——”

He paused with some confusion, remembering that all his business credentials and letters of credit were lost in the luckless *Gaviota*; and in this momentary bewilderment he was handcuffed—yea, literally and most securely handcuffed to a soldier—as an additional security.

“*Cartucho en el canon, hombres*” (load your arms), said Captain Salvador Gonzalez, on which the escort loaded and capped their rifles, and very dirty looking fellows they were, their garish and braided uniforms being like some of the “properties” of an itinerant theatre.

Lennard was then conducted on shore, and marched from the quay, through narrow, irregular, and ill-lighted streets, amid a motley and copper-coloured crowd of Mexicans, who heaped their most bitter reproaches on him as “*matador y assassino*,” and among them he thought he heard the voice of Trocadero.

“For Heaven’s sake, señor, let us proceed quickly,” said he to the officer, “that we may avoid this detestable rabble.”

“You are in a hurry, hombre—the place we are bound for is not so pleasant after all.”

“May I ask where you have orders to convey me?”

“Si, amigo mio,” replied the officer, who thought little of a case of homicide more or less, “to the castle of San Juan de Ulloa.”

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CASTLE OF SAN JUAN DE ULLOA.

WITH intense chagrin and annoyance, which afterwards grew to wild and vague uncertainty of purpose, he had walked between his escort to the point where a boat took them to the prison, and there he heard himself formally given over by the Captain Salvador Gonzalez, who received a receipt for him, and then bluntly withdrew, without a glance or a bow.

Lennard's first thought was that the whole affair, if not a mistake which would be easily explained, was a trap, a device, or scheme resulting from the trickery of José Saavedra, of Trocadero, of Vere perhaps, or of all together; in short, he knew not what to think. His mind was a chaos, and he passed a night of sleepless misery, tormented by reflection and the mosquitos.

He had been searched, and Trocadero's loaded pistols were found upon his person. In a country where all men go well armed this discovery excited

no comment; they were quietly confiscated, and so were the contents of his purse, among the officials of the great government prison.

He fully and fondly believed that the next morning would afford him some solution of the mystery; he did not undress, but lay on a couch, the appearance of which was very repugnant to him, and in a cell, the walls of which were built of that peculiar soft white stone of which the castle is composed—so soft, indeed, that cannon shot do not splinter, but imbed themselves in it.

A can of coffee and a slice of indifferent bread were given to him by a taciturn warder, from whom he could not extract a single word.

The first day in the castle of San Juan lagged slowly on; his simple dinner of plaintains, beans, and garlic, with a jug of cold water was followed by another cup of coffee for supper; the night came on, and still he was a prisoner, unquestioned and unfettered, and the reason for the latter circumstance he discovered to be the vast strength and seclusion of the fortress, when, after enduring three days of mental torture and exasperation in his cell, he was permitted to take the air for two hours under sure guard on the ramparts, with the warning that if he attempted to leap over he should be shot; so that he was sure of death any way, as the walls are of enormous height.

The castle of San Juan de Ulloa is separated by several hundred yards of sea from the city, and occupies the rocky islet near which the gilded and

high-pooped caravels of Hernan Cortez were moored, when, on the Good Friday of 1519, he first discovered the great harbour that lay beyond, and in the pious spirit of his people and of the age, named the land La Vera Cruz; and on that rock the fortress was built, when, about sixty years after, Sir John Hawkins, Admiral of England, surprised in the haven twenty-five great ships of Spain, with a new viceroy and sixty tons of gold on board; but succeeded in carrying off only two galleons.

Three hundred pieces of cannon, many of them being of polished brass, bristle round its walls, which vary in thickness from twelve to eighteen feet, and have their bases on the rock or in the sea. The entrances to this castle are labyrinths of high stone walls, cunningly devised passages, having ponderous gates and drawbridges, flights of steps and vault-like ascents, guarded at every turn by sentinels, and swept by brass cannon and mortars; and as the Mexicans are always smoking, these alleys are strewn with cigar-ends, sawdust, and sand.

Every way Lennard turned his eyes the round muzzles of cannon gaped at him, so that whole regiments might be swept away ere a passage was fought into the heart of the place; yet all its battlements seem to have been sorely battered and defaced by the bombarding of the French in 1829 and the Americans twenty years after. Blackened and reddened by age, it towers above the sea on one side and the flat of Gallega on the other—a marshy swamp, the very abode of the vomito and the grim

fever-king, and which in the rainy season is haunted by alligators, some of them seven or eight feet long, and strong enough to drag a bull under water.

Though a necessity for escape or the idea of it never crossed the mind of Lennard Blair, who confidently expected a very ample apology for his unseemly detention, he felt his heart sink, as he surveyed this strange and sea-girt castle, which, like a mighty lock, barred him in from the outer world; and lower sunk his spirit when he looked at the city of Vera Cruz opposite.

Deathlike and gloomy it was in aspect, and surrounded in its immediate vicinity by shifting hillocks of red sand. Built like the castle, chiefly of coral dragged from the bed of the sea, its houses were all of the most sombre old Spanish or rather Moorish fashion, with deep shady balconies in front, dark arcades below, and flat roofs, over which rose the spires and domes of sixteen churches. High above all, in mid air, hovered dark clouds of sopilotes, or black vultures, wheeling in circles, till they settled on some carrion in the streets, or on a dead horse lying amid the mangles and brushwood of the Arroya Gavilan.

Could fortune or wealth be made in such a place, where silence seemed to reign, and grass grew in the streets?

Gloomy though the city, the vessels in the Bay of Vergara were all decked with colours, and the bells were ringing joyously in all the churches the

summons to morning mass, for this was Christmas-day, and he was spending it, a prisoner without a crime, in the castle of San Juan de Ulloa !

After two hours on the parapets he was again locked up, his warders maintaining an inexorable silence worthy of those of the Bastille de St. Antoine; but at the prospect of three days more solitary confinement in a white cell, the walls of which were spotted by mosquitos and cockroaches, and by the hideous scratchings, names, dates, prayers, and imprecations of former occupants, with bad coffee for breakfast, boiled plantains and pimentos for dinner, he became so exasperated that the bastonero threatened to put him in a dark place on a level with the sea, where there would be no light. So several days passed away; the time actually grew to be weeks, in which he lost all count of it, for as the bells chimed every morning for mass he knew not the seventh day from any other.

He grew thin, pale, haggard, and hopeless; and perpetual exasperation at his lawless detention imparted a fierce and restless expression to his eyes; but one portion of the twenty-four hours alone soothed him.

This was the short vesper-time, when the chimes of the bells in church and convent came floating over the water and upward to his little grated window, from whence he could see Vera Cruz sinking into obscurity. From its uncertain shadows and broken masses of building a few lights would twinkle out, after the sun, with a fiery

crimson glow, had set beyond those mountains which are but the declivity of the Cordilleras of Anahuac; then black clouds would come slowly sailing over the crimson flush, and the monstrous sopilotes, gorged with carrion in the streets and marshes would sit drowsily flapping their sable pinions on the prison wall above his head.

The few street cries that came upon the wind—those of the sellers of mats, of curd and honey-cakes, of tortillas, of the carbonero, or coalmen, and so forth—would gradually die away, and then all became still in Vera Cruz; and when “the world was left to darkness” and to him, the breast of Lennard Blair swelled with many sad and bitter emotions, known alone to God and to himself.

With a yearning heart and wistful eye, he watched ships and steamers come and go in the Bay of Vergara, and once he saw a British ship of war, and then he almost shouted for succour, with tears that he could not repress. Long and eagerly his eyes followed her, as she steamed out of sight beyond Point Hornos, and he thought with pride of the limits assigned, by Tallyrand, to our empire, “wherever there was water for a British frigate;” but what availed it him? And when she disappeared, he vented his impotent wrath on the Queen’s Consul and the Mexican authorities.

He writhed in spirit, and deemed it hard indeed that he, a poor young fellow who had done no wrong and had harmed no one, should be thus the sport of an evil destiny.

Nightly out of the darkness, as he lay sleepless on his pallet, he could see the face of Dora with all its purity of complexion and brilliance of eye, so sweet, so fond and frank, bordered by its wealth of golden hair, and his glowing fancy drew her smiles and all her varieties of expression with wonderful distinctness. Would he ever look upon that fair young face again; or had she forgotten him, even as another had done?

"Has she believed in this absurd—outrageous accusation against me—oh, surely not!" he would say fondly and trustingly; "but I have been deceived once—why not again?" he added, bitterly.

Hesbia Vere had shaken the foundations of faith in his heart, and the stab of her bestowing had left a scar there, which time would heal—had healed it, indeed—but years must needs pass ere it faded for ever away.

Then rage against certain persons, some of whom were unknown, but chiefly against the two Saavedras, would swell up into his breast; for he failed not to recall every instance of Señor José's offensive bearing from the first time they had met so casually at the Preston Station—*now* it seemed as if years had passed since then—and the supercilious manner of his gaily-attired nephew, during that last eventful hour on board *Neustra Señora del Guadaloupe*. Lennard's pale face looked paler than ever now, for dark and unhealthy circles surrounded his eyes, and his features had become pinched and drawn from sleeplessness and over-thought.

He sought advice of the chaplain of the fortress—a Franciscan friar, a mild and pleasing old gentleman, who though he gave Lennard from time to time a few cigars as a little bit of human charity, evidently regarded him with more disgust than commiseration, and could only shrug his shoulders, clasp his hands, and turn up his eyes in reply to the prisoner's assertions of his total innocence of any crimes, and the impossibility of his having committed them, being, at the time stated, far away upon the sea.

"Hijo mio, a writer has said that 'even the quietest life reeks with the devil's whispering;' if so, why not yours—thus it may be all very true what you say," the friar would reply.

"Will you, Señor Padre, kindly convey for me a letter to a gentleman of Vera Cruz?" asked Lennard.

"Most willingly I shall, with the permission of the governor," replied the Franciscan blandly.

"Oh, how can I sufficiently thank you!"

"I require no thanks; but to whom do you wish your letter given?"

"To the father of a lady whom I befriended—whom I saved indeed from great peril after our shipwreck."

"His name, hijo mio?"

"Señor Dominga."

The friar thought for a time, playing the while with the knotted cord that girt his flowing robe, and then he said,—

"There is no such name in all Vera Cruz—of that I am assured."

"Ah, do not say so," urged Lennard.

"I do—it is impossible."

"Why, padre?"

"Because Dominga is a woman's name; if spelt with an *o*, it is a man's. There is some confusion here, my son."

"Dora Dominga," thought Lennard in his own heart, with a sinking there; "can it be that I have never learned her correct surname. But the list of the steamer's passengers must be procurable somehow, though not by *me*. Do you know Señor José Saavedra?" he asked.

"By name and sight I do; one of our richest merchants and a kind patron of our convent—a sharp-visaged little man, with large moustaches."

"The same! To him then will I appeal. He cannot be so heartless as to leave me here untried and forgotten; and there also is Don Juan Leonardo, with whom I have so often corresponded concerning Vere & Co."

"Write then, hijo mio, and if the Señor Gobernador permits me, I shall be happy to undertake the safe delivery of your letter."

Lennard did so, on the kind friar giving him materials. He wrote to Señor Saavedra, imploring him by the memory of their past adventures together, by his own knowledge that it was utterly and physically impossible that he, Lennard Blair, could have broken the laws of Mexico, to procure

his release. He wrote in the same spirit to their mercantile correspondents, Leonardo & Co., announcing the business reasons for his visit to Vera Cruz, and the dangerous predicament, to save him from which he craved their influence; and these missives he gave to the friar, with something of hope glowing in his heart again.

But many weary days passed on.

The padre asserted that he had delivered the letters personally to the gentlemen to whom they were addressed; but no answer ever came to either, and the soul of the captive, who was now haggard and almost in rags, began to sicken within him, till he hoped that the yellow fever, which is the scourge of Vera Cruz, and invariably attacks all Europeans, would some day carry him off, and find him a grave, even where the bones of many a poor "heretic" lie, in the unconsecrated swamp of Gallega.

"I have been deceived and abandoned by those in whom I trusted," he exclaimed with intense bitterness; "Well—I suppose such things have always been since ships have sailed and winds have blown, and since men and women have loved and parted!"

Then would a gasping sob escape him—a sob to the memory of all that seemed gone for ever, and the desire to be at rest. Why live if trust were dead and love lost?

Of his imprisonment and danger, and the temporary—he could scarcely deem it permanent—destruction of all the prospects and intentions which had brought him to Vera Cruz, he thought infinitely

less than the suspense concerning his abandonment by Dora. Doubts of her were so many stings of mental agony, and perhaps the certainty that she had ceased to love, or had learned to blush for him, would have been preferable to the horrible uncertainty he endured.

The villainous prisoners with whom he was periodically brought into contact—half-castes of all colours—steeped to the lips in every variety of crime and atrocity, caused him to shudder, and his too evident repugnance excited their hatred and amusement.

“Poor fellow,” said one in mock commiseration ; “so you are weary of our pretty castle of San Juan de Ulloa ? ”

“More than tongue could tell you ! ”

“Then, if you would escape, get a rope with a light loop, and take a long leap over the wall.”

“I have no desire to die by my own hand.”

“Diabolo,” said the convict with a grin, which made his white teeth glisten under his coal-black moustache ; “ ’tis better than dying slowly by the iron collar and screw.”

“The garotte, hombre, which we all know awaits you, if you escape dragging a chain in the mines of San Luiz de Potosi,” added another.

Lennard could only respond by an angry sigh to the mocking laugh of the gachupin, whose crime had merely been the burning of a rancho, or farmhouse, with all its inmates, to conceal a prior robbery.

The last months Lennard had spent at Blairavon and Oakwoodlee; memories of the varied tints of the glorious Scottish hills and woods in autumn; the fields of West Lothian, which had been covered with golden grain, that bent like billows before the gentle wind, studded with the blue cornflowers and scarlet poppies; of the grey old church, whose solemn shadow fell on the graves of his father and mother; the quaint ancestral château of the Stuart days, with its slated turrets and gilded vanes; the faces of Steinie Hislop and of Elsie, who would have died for him; of kind Frank Feverley, the hard-worked village doctor; of his own luckless love affair with Hesbia, and all the troubles in which it had involved him; his sweeter and serener time with Donna Dora on the long voyage out; the terrors of their adventure on the isle; their brief separation and reunion there,—all seemed shadowy phantoms now, or fragments of an existence, long, long past.

Three months glided drearily away.

The rain had fallen in torrents, covering the swamp of Gallega with water, amid the mud and ooze of which the huge alligators squatted and waddled to and fro. The miasma around the castle of San Juan was frightful, and the terrible vomito (or yellow fever) began to make its appearance among the prisoners and creole soldiers of the garrison, while the black sopilotes, like the harbingers of death, gathered thick as mosquitoes about the lofty walls and gun-batteries.

Reckless of the future, Lennard felt fearless of the grim disease.

"Destiny! who can change, avoid, or avert it?" he exclaimed, in his solitude, as the gloomy horror of fatalism settled over him. "I was weak enough, and superstitious enough, to believe in the virtue of the old Charter Stone, and that its retention as my own would bring back fortune to the old house—now—*now!*"

He ended in a peal of bitter laughter, the strange sound of which appalled himself, and made him grow grave and sad.

CHAPTER .XXII.

THE VILLA LEONARDO.

THE same evening in which our hero abandoned himself to this mood of despondency, or despair, was that appointed for a fête at the villa of Don Juan Leonardo, the wealthy planter and merchant—the same Alcalde-Ordinario by whose warrant Lennard Blair had been committed a prisoner to the great carcel.

Situated a few miles westward of Vera Cruz, it stood—we should rather say it stands—in a beautiful and fertile district, where forests of banana, the pine, and oak mingle their foliage, branch over branch, in the most intricate of weaving and twisting, and where, through an occasional patch of blue, the light reaches the rank vegetation of months about their roots below. There, too, grow the trees whose odoriferous root is used for perfuming chocolate; and there, in the rocky and humid ravines which lead towards the Cordilleras, are the myrtle, the tobacco plant, and sarsaparilla growing wild.

The villa was so loftily situated that the temperature was delicious; Vera Cruz, the ship-studded bay, and gigantic castle were visible, but at a distance and seemingly far down below, while about two miles to the southward rose the volcano of Tuxtli.

Don Juan's residence was built in the form of a square, after the fashion of such houses in Mexico. Entering the court, around which opened the bath-rooms, kitchens, and apartments of the white and coloured servants, a magnificent staircase led to the sala, a lofty hall floored with marble, ceiled with snow-white stucco, elaborately gilded, and draped with white muslin and blue silk fringed with silver, though the walls were papered with blue and gold. The chairs, cane sofas, divans, and chaises-longues all being cushioned with blue satin, tasselled and corded with silver.

The blossoms and perfume of a thousand orchards, orange-groves, and flower-gardens were loading the soft night air with voluptuous fragrance, that stole through the tall and open windows of this magnificent sala, to mingle with the sweet odours emitted by bouquets, pastilles, and the scented waters of a white marble fountain, that spouted from shells upheld by Tritons of Venetian bronze, and sparkled and plashed in the vestibule, where the dancers or promenaders from time to time dipped their handkerchiefs in it.

This night was the fête of Donna Dora—the daughter of Don Juan Leonardo, for—no longer to keep the reader in the dark—such she was: a fête

long postponed by an illness she had endured, but now given in honour of her recovery and return home; and, strange as it may appear, amid all their lovemaking, Lennard had learned only her Christian names, Isidora Dominga, and hence a great mistake and mystery on his part.

The joy of a reunion with her father had been sorely embittered by the cloud which hung over Lennard's arrest and detention, she could not precisely learn where, save that it was certainly in some secure prison—neither could she learn precisely for what, though her waiting-maid, Mencia, was one of the greatest gossips in Vera Cruz. She feared to express too much interest in his fate, even to her father, whom Saavedra had bitterly prejudiced against Lennard, whom he believed—for, in reality, Don Juan inquired little into the affair—to have come, not from England by the steamer, but from Cuba, or to have been one of the crew of the suspicious *Gaviota*. In short, the Mexican merchant, for reasons in connection with Vere and Co., and shortly to be explained, cared very little on the subject.

Loving Lennard in her heart most dearly, Dora fancied that every one she met must read the secret in her face; and so they might, had they observed narrowly how her colour came and went when his name was mentioned, which was but seldom, and only when the Saavedras were present, the real cause of his long detention being the want of certain witnesses who were necessary for his conviction of the crimes imputed to him.

Poor little Dora did not understand it all very clearly; she only knew that, unless Lennard had been in Mexico *before* they met in England and on board the *Golden Dream* (a circumstance to which he never alluded), he must of necessity be perfectly innocent of all alleged against him. The helpless prisoner was her plighted love; honour required that she should seek him out and defend him so far as lay in her power; but she was kept in total ignorance of much relating to his situation, and maidenly modesty—more than all, the strict and jealous reserve imparted by old Spanish manners, and the helpless and negative position of an unmarried girl—made her very silent on the subject, as she trembled for the influence of José Saavedra on her father, and for all that he might reveal. This struggle within herself—this mental torture and anxiety—together with what she had undergone on board the *Gaviota*, the wreck and the subsequent exposure on the island, induced a serious illness under which she had laboured long, and thus her fête had been delayed for nearly three months.

Countless lights of perfumed wax made the villa brilliant, and as the rooms began to fill with company, Dora resolving to be almost the last to appear, lingered long in her dressing-closet, seated before her tall cheval glass, dreamingly submitting to the manipulation and dressing of her masses of golden hair by a Spanish creole girl—hair so long that it reached in silky ripples to her knee.

To her father she was gentle, tender, and dutiful

as ever ; but to others Donna Dora was changed in mood and temper, and when he detected this he simply conceived it to be the result of her three years' residence in England under the control of governesses.

Her sweet and tender tone, her coaxing ways were gone, and her graceful impetuosity of manner had degenerated into mere girlish petulance. There were times when she was careless and heedless of all and of everything, and such was her mood to-night. From a casual remark dropped jestingly by Ignacio Saavedra she had learned that Lennard Blair was a prisoner in the castle of San Juan, between yonder horrid swamps and the sea.

She had no longer his ring on her finger : in the present terrible state of affairs—doubt she had none of Lennard, and if she had, Dora would have loved him still—she dreaded her father's questioning and the sharp eyes of the Saavedras, elder and younger ; so for a time the quaint old signet of Richard Blair—almost his son's only heritage now—was consigned to the secret drawer of her jewel-case.

Dora knew well that if it were seen now by Señor José or Don Ignacio (he was so styled in right of his mother, who was a lady of noble birth) they would take her to task for wearing the ring of the assassin and ladrone who was awaiting his trial in San Juan, and she hated both in her heart.

José Saavedra was well aware that she had worn such a ring since that eventful time in the *Golden Dream* ; he chose now to commit the knowledge to

silence, supposing that she had cast it away in shame of the donor. But how little he knew of his god-daughter Isidora Leonardo!

Her piano—one of Broadwood's best—she had never opened, save once in an attempt to accompany herself to a verse or two of that song which first lured Lennard to her side, and the despairing lines of Pedro Padilla seemed so suited to her own case that the young girl burst into tears and closed the instrument.

She was pale as marble now, for all the richness of her colour had fled. Her eyes looked unusually large and dark, and her minute and finely-cut little mouth unnaturally crimson. But these were the results of her recent fever and her present agitation of mind.

"Mencia," she asked impatiently, "are you nearly done with my hair?"

"Yes, señora, in another minute."

"I would rather have it cut off than be worried thus."

"I am making all haste, for the company are already beginning to arrive. Señor Saavedra and his nephew are already below."

"Of course," said Dora, shrugging her white shoulders and angrily opening and shutting a magnificent fan, the mother-of-pearl sticks of which were studded with turquoises; "it is ever so—the stupid and the least wanted always arrive first, and are the last to depart."

"The music is not yet begun, señora; but re-

member that you are engaged for the first waltz to Don Ignacio—and the first manolo too.”

“He told you so?” said Dora sharply.

“Si, señora, when he gave me that lovely bouquet for you.”

“Where is it?”

“On yonder console.”

“Throw it out into the balcony——”

“But bouquetier, señora?” urged the abigail.

“Throw it out too,” said the petulant little beauty.

“The first waltz! The moon must have been waning when he said this.”

“Likely enough, señora—but when is *his* moon ever on the wane?” said the girl, catching something of her mistress’s humour.

“You forget, Mencia, that Don Ignacio is my father’s friend.”

“And the señora’s devoted but unacceptable servant,” said Mencia, laughing.

“I have other things to think of than his attentions, Mencia,” said Dora dreamily, and then she added, with a burst of emotion, “Oh, God help those anxious folks who are perpetually living in the past rather than the present, and, worst of all, the future, and who, like me, anticipate sorrow and evil ere they come!”

“Such should be the fate of the poor, the old, the bereaved, and unhappy; not of the rich, the beautiful, and envied, like one who owns all this golden hair and those magnificent diamonds,” said Mencia, who was a dark type of the Spanish girl, and

by contrast made her mistress seem more brilliantly white and fair. "With a few of those braids and brilliants I should have a dozen lovers at my feet. I have been wearying for a flirtation ever since Captain Gonzalez y Llano's company marched against the brigands in the Barancas, and pretty girls, like sweet grapes, will not keep for ever."

"Mencia, how your tongue runs on!"

"Pardon, señora," said the girl, who was every-way pretty, piquante, and smart, as she clasped a magnificent necklace of turquoises and brilliants round the slender neck of Donna Dora.

"Well, Mencia, I have heard that the brigands have been overcome, and Salvador Gonzalez's company are returning to Vera Cruz—indeed, we expect him here to-night."

"Señora, your toilette is now complete."

"Thank you, Mencia; then I must go. But, oh," added Dora mentally, "pining as I do for one whom I dare not openly love, and on whose frank, honest face I may never look again, how can I face all that glare and glitter—that crowd of stupid people down stairs!"

She said the last words half aloud, for Mencia observed,—

"We have not a moment to lose in meeting them. Don Juan has thrice sent his valet to ask when you will be ready to receive the guests, who are pouring hither in honour of your fête."

"Would that I had gone to my aunt at the convent!" said Dora wearily, as she rose and shook out

her dress, which was in the most fashionable Mexican mode, being of white satin, with robe and mantilla over it, both of white blonde, with short sleeves and a low-cut bosom. Her entire suite of jewels consisted of diamonds and turquoises, and very lovely the pale girl looked, exciting a buzz of admiration as she entered the already crowded sala, and, concealing the canker in her heart, passed through the brilliant throng (where the display of bright-coloured satins and velvets, of blondes and brilliants, was wonderfully lavish) with a word and a smile for all, and using her fan the while as only a Spanish girl can handle it

Her father, Don Juan, whom we shall describe more particularly in a subsequent chapter—a grave and somewhat sombre man—surveyed her with a smile of pride and affection, glad alike of her recovery and the admiration she excited; for she was—as he was fond of calling her—his “one ewe lamb,” being the last survivor of his little flock, all of whom had perished of the yellow fever, which is the peculiar scourge and terror of Vera Cruz.

CHAPTER XXIII.

DORA'S FÊTE.

THE band of a militia regiment was performing a species of overture while the company assembled, and the increasing glitter of gems, the display of gold lace on uniforms, and on the picturesque but somewhat fantastic attire of the gentlemen, the gorgeous liveries of the servants, who in baskets and on trays of silver bore about bouquets and ices, made the whole sala a scene of wonderful brilliance.

The dresses of the ladies were beautiful in colour and mode, and many were the superb Spanish eyes, the beautiful hands, and snowy arms and busts which were there—models perfect for a sculptor's eye; but none were equal to Dora—at least, so thought Don Ignacio, who, considering himself as somewhat of a privileged person—assuming, in fact, all the bearing of an accepted suitor—offered her his hand for the first waltz.

On this night Don Ignacio wore a costume which would have put to shame the funereal full dress of a

European. In fashion it was not unlike that of Figaro in *Il Barbiere*, and quite eclipsed even the uniforms of the Mexican Lancers, who were arriving fast, and doffing their yellow serapes and high-plumed helmets in the vestibule.

His jacket and pantaloons were of rose-coloured velvet, slashed with white silk, and elaborately braided and fringed with silver, particularly at the sleeves and shoulders; his vest was of white satin, and every button was a cluster of brilliants. He wore rings above his white kid gloves; and so careful had been his toilette that he almost looked well, though his complexion was somewhat green, his moustaches the most meagre, and his eyes small, beady, and in expression wicked.

"You have not my bouquet, señora," said he, with an air of undisguised pique; "yet I gave it to your maid Mencia—whom, when I look on you, I may well term your camarista mayor," he added, with his most insinuating smile.

"I forgot it—left it in my room, in fact, señor," said Dora, pouting, and in no way mollified by Don Ignacio's compliment in royally styling Mencia her mistress of the robes.

"An error easily repaired; a servant, if you will permit me——"

"Oh, pray, no!—bouquets always give me a headache, and there is quite perfume enough around us."

Don Ignacio bit his lips, and would have eyed her malevolently had he dared; but a crash of music from the gallery announced the first bars of the

waltz. His arm stole round her waist, and in another moment they were mingling in the glittering maze of couples that swept almost noiselessly over the polished marble floor.

Dora's card had been instantly filled, so another and another came to claim her hand; especially after the arrival of the Governor and his aides-de-camp, whose showy uniforms were literally covered with gold lace, and whose bullion epaulettes were of the most colossal dimensions.

Amid all the gaiety of her fête and the attentions of which she was the centre, as the beautiful heiress of one of the wealthiest men in Vera Cruz—amid all the compliments so softly paid her in her sonorous native language, often by handsome and picturesque fellows—amid all the strange questions asked her concerning Europe and the Inglesos, her voyage and adventures—her thoughts were ever wandering to the prison of San Juan, and one who was lingering there, till the force of contrast between their relative positions made her feel wretched indeed.

Yet, to please her father—to do honour to those who sought to do honour unto her—she made a great effort to appear gay amid the gayest, and to converse on the current topics—the last new fashion of everything; of music and pictures; of the coming bullfight; of the promenades in the Alameda, where her English training made her wish to go afoot, to the astonishment of the Mexican donnas, who, through “a mixture of aristocracy and indolence,”

are never seen there save in carriages ; of the new company of comicos at the theatre ; of the benefit-night of the great prima donna from Madrid ; of her excelling in "Segunda Donna Duenda ;" and how the beautiful corps-de-ballet shone in "Jota Arragonesa," to the great delight of José Saavedra and other gentlemen from old Spain.

Yet to Dora, who had been three years in Europe, it had seemed odd that in the great theatre of Vera Cruz, when the silk-draped grand tier was full of splendidly-dressed women, the male occupants of boxes, pit, and gallery were all smoking assiduously, and that even the prompter at the wing regaled himself with a huge diablo marino, the smoke of which curled forth between the mimic rocks and trees of the side scenes.

Captured once more by Don Ignacio, flushed with repeated dancing, wearied—worried is perhaps the more proper word—by the systematic attentions of that young gentleman, Dora begged to be excused dancing again, and was led by him into the cool vestibule, where the bronze and marble fountain was plashing its perfumed water, and where the servants were distributing ices—a rare luxury in a climate so warm.

Seating herself on an ottoman near other ladies, that she might avoid any private remarks specially addressed to her, Dora, while fanning her flushed face, half turned a charming white shoulder to her admirer, as she knew but too well that it was for this very nephew that José Saavedra wished to secure her

hand—views which Don Ignacio was quite disposed to forward so far as himself was concerned ; and to which her own father was not averse, though he had frequently waived the subject by saying that he did not think his daughter old enough to marry yet.

Some of her admirer's vapid and commonplace remarks were now interrupted by the jingling of a pair of spurs—enormous Mexican spurs, having rowels like those worn by the knights of Bannockburn or Cressi ; and, throwing aside a scarlet serape, the tall and sombre officer, Don Salvador Gonzalez y Llano, approached and kissed her hand with great grace and courtesy. He was a gentleman of the first position in the province, and was lineally descended from that Pedro de Alvarado who, on the memorable retreat of the *Noche Triste*—the 1st of July, 1520—covered the rear of the fugitive Spaniards, and, using his lance as a vaulting-pole, made that wonderful leap over the ditch which still bears his name.

"I rejoice, señora, to see you restored to health, and looking so well," said the captain.

"I thank you, Don Salvador ; you have, I believe, just arrived from the mountains ?"

"We marched in this afternoon ; but I still leave my lieutenant with twenty men in pursuit of some outlaws on the old Indian road, towards Cordilleras—undoubtedly a portion of the band with which this pitiful picaro, Lennard Blair, connected himself."

Dora changed colour painfully at this name. The flush caused by the dancing passed away ; no

marble could be paler than her cheek, and Ignacio, who had all the sudden and serpent-like jealousy of the Spanish nature, saw the alteration with secret rage. Her whitened lips had not the power of questioning further, so he took up the thread of the conversation, to which all who were present listened with interest.

"Ah—then if your lieutenant is successful, we may succeed in obtaining the required proofs against this English criminal?"

"Exactly; the band have scattered and separated among the Barancas for safety, but all shall be cut off in detail. From the measures we have taken, it is impossible for one to escape," replied the officer, confidently, as he smoothed his long black moustache, and looking like what he was—every inch a soldier.

"I congratulate you, Salvador, amigo mio," said Don Juan, now coming forward, his tall and handsome, though thin, figure, appearing to great advantage in a dress of plain black cloth, but cut in the Mexican fashion, and only relieved by its bright steel buttons, and the whiteness of his cambric shirt and frills.

"I surrounded the main body of this gang of ladrones in a cane-brake, which we set on fire to windward, and from the leeward—if a soldier may use sea terms—we opened a fusilade at one hundred and fifty paces, hoping to destroy them all; but some broke through us and fled, half scorched, and wholly despairing. Among others was Trebucio Trocadero, the notorious wrecker and coolie crimp,

who escaped from the Cuban steamer; but he has two bullets from my revolver in his body. These fugitives must soon be overtaken, and they are certainly the last of those men who leagued with this Lennard Blair in robbing the mails on the roads to Xalappa and Tampico."

"Lennard Blair again!" thought Dora; "what madness — what mystery can lie under all this!"

And she began to deem herself veritably a little coward for fearing to speak in defence of her lover, as José Saavedra had led Don Juan and many others to believe, what all in Vera Cruz had been given to understand, that the culprit taken on board the *Neustra Senora del Guadalupe*, had returned from Cuba, and was not what he asserted himself to be — a passenger from England by the *Golden Dream*.

"A few days ago I had a letter from the rascal," said Don Juan; "it was written in very tolerable Spanish, and boldly urged alike his innocence, and an immediate trial. He even threatened me, as *Alcalde Ordinario*, with the British Government."

"Daring rogue!" said José Saavedra.

"Keeping him in San Juan is simply feeding up a wretch who ought to be garotted in the Plaza," added his nephew.

"Proofs once found, no time shall be lost," said Leonardo, who in consequence of the very slight inquiries he had made personally into the history of the stranger arrested, on his own warrant, too — owing also to the studious misrepresentations of the two

Saavadras—and perhaps more than all owing to certain circumstances connected with Vere & Co. (to be explained in due time) Don Juan Leonardo was exasperated against Lennard, and could not hear his name mentioned without emotion or rage. “You know, gentlemen,” he resumed, “to what an amount he forged bills upon me, after having drawn out every peseta that was due to Vere & Co. of Liverpool; how he forged on the bank of Vera Cruz, and after gambling like a madman, joined some of those reckless spirits who had been ruined at the faro tables, and then began those outrages on the highway, which ended in the last mail robbery so fatally, and after which it was said he had fled to Cuba.”

“Madre de Dios—Donna Dora has fainted!” exclaimed the officer, as a gasping cry escaped her, and she fell back insensible on the blue satin ottoman, over which her golden hair fell in a shower, and then all became confusion and dismay around her.

“My dear child—the heat and the over-exertion of to-night have proved too much for her!” exclaimed Leonardo, in great excitement, as he raised her in his arms, and bore her into the cooler atmosphere of the broad verandah which encircled the villa; and then Ignacio and Mencia, with handkerchief freshly dipped in the fountain, freely bathed her face, neck, and hands. The use of fans, and the pleasant breeze that came from the woods and from the sea, which glittered like silver in the moonlight, soon combined to revive her.

“God be thanked, she is recovering!” said Don

Juan, in a low and earnest voice, as she opened her eyes, respired, and as consciousness returned made a painful effort to recover herself and stand erect ; but had to recline in a drooping posture against the rail of the verandah.

"I have done wrong in having this fête so early," said Don Juan ; "she has not sufficiently recovered her strength. Dora, darling, I have had letters from your aunt at the Guadaloupe convent, wishing much to see you ; and to her, if well enough, you shall go to-morrow for a time. Change of scene, of air, and more than all, the quiet of the convent, will alike conduce to your recovery."

"Thank you, dear papa. I shall be most happy to go."

"The carriage and an escort furnished by Salvador Gonzalez, shall set out with you after breakfast ; and Ignacio Saavedra will ride by the window."

"Very well, papa—anything to please you, I shall do willingly, and I do so long to see my aunt, and ask her advice on certain matters," she replied, meekly, as she added, "make my excuses with a kind good night to all," and retired, leaning on the arm of Mercia, while many of the Mexican cavaliers and officers bowed their heads and drained their glasses of champagne, while shouting as she passed from amid them,—

"Viva ! a la salud de neustra patrona Donna Isidora !"

"Of what the deuce were we talking ?" said the officer from the mountains. "I hope I said nothing

to frighten or excite her, in detailing the slaughter of a few picaroons and ragamuffins ! ”

“ It is to that very subject, and to the English prisoner in San Juan, we must attribute the whole affair,” said Don Ignacio.

“ How so, señor ? ” asked Leonardo, sharply.

“ Sooth to say, señor, whenever that fellow’s name is mentioned she betrays the most painful emotion—the result, probably, of their short voyage together,” added Ignacio, whose jealous exasperation was at fever-heat.

“ Indeed ! ” said Don Juan, with deeply knitted brows and a threatening aspect, particularly grateful to the Saavedras ; “ then proofs or no proofs, I shall have this Englishman rigidly questioned on the morrow ! ”

CHAPTER XXIV.

EL CASA DEL AYUNTAMIENTO.

ABOUT the same time when Don Juan's handsome and well-hung London-made carriage, drawn by two white horses with driver and servants in crimson and gold livery in true Mexican taste—and with Don Ignacio in a dress covered with embroidery, a diamond-handled switch in his hand, and his huge stirrups of silver, caracoling by the window through which he sought in vain to catch a glimpse of Dora—left Vera Cruz, escorted by a corporal's guard of lancers in their yellow serapes and glittering helmets, a boat with soldiers and a prisoner in it, was rowed across the little strait which separates the castle of San Juan from the city.

The soldiers in the boat were four in number, and had their bayonets fixed, for the prisoner was Lennard Blair on his way to a first examination before the alcalde, by whose warrant he had been arrested.

Dora saw not the boat, nor even the Bay of

Vergara, as her route lay in an opposite direction ; Ignacio Saavedra failed to obtain the least sign of her presence within the recesses of the handsome carriage, as she studiously kept the glasses up and and had but one feeling—a longing to cast herself upon the bosom of her aunt, her mother's only sister, to tell the story of her love for one she dared not name and to obtain advice, for she had less fear of imparting the secret to the recluse than to her father who doted on her.

Poor Lennard inhaled the free sea-breeze of the open bay with intense satisfaction. He had now been for three months in the great fortress, the looming mass of which lessened and dwindled as the distance increased between it and the boat ; and in loathing he turned his back upon it.

He looked forward confidently to release, and even to apologies for his illegal detention on charges so outrageous, as the immediate result of his trial, examination, or whatever tribunal he was now about to face, forgetting that he was in a land where all the forms of law and order are crude, strange, and undefined.

Having grown heedless of everything, almost of life itself, during his weary captivity, Lennard had permitted his hair, beard and moustache, to grow uncut and untrimmed ; so his appearance, especially in his extremely dilapidated costume, was certainly wild and odd enough.

Odd, too, were the sights that awaited him in Vera Cruz, such as the costume of the alguazils (or

constables) to whom the soldiers consigned him, and who wore broad sombreros, vandyke collars, and the short cloaks and breeches of a long past age; the crowds about the landing-place and in the streets; bronze-looking men with only a poncho or blanket about them; women also of colour, barelegged, with short petticoats of different hues and with rebozos, or head-scarfs of yellow and red stripes, under which the little brown baby some carried on their back peeped forth with black and glittering eyes. There, too, were pure Indian girls with light dresses of a stuff as dark as their own skins, their long black tangled locks plaited with scarlet ribbon; priests with shovel hats, and friars of various orders in loose robes with bare and sandaled feet; aguadores and cargadores, and leperos in plenty, hideous with sores and rags; noisy vendors of dulces, diarios and garbonzas, *i.e.*, sweet nuts, newspspers, and chick-peas, itinerant guitar-players, and Spanish gentlemen mounted on handsome horses with high demi-pique saddles and silver stirrups, gold-embroidered angueros, or saddle-cloths, edged with dark fringe and rows of little bells, their sombreros and velvet jackets ornamented with gold, their slit pantaloons with lace and rows of silver buttons down the seams, their boots of stamped leather, and their serapes or graceful mangas having capes of bright-hued velvet.

In costume, bearing and aspect, every group and every individual figure might have formed worthily an artist's study.

English and Spanish sailors were numerous amid the crowd which surveyed Lennard as he was conducted through the wide and principal street of Vera Cruz, the flat-roofed houses of which are so baked by the sun, that they all seem as if scorched or blackened by fire; but picturesque-like men and women were seen in the broad covered balconies, and overhead dozing on the cornices, were the black *sopilotes* gorged with garbage. The glare and heat of the sun were great, but the footways lay chiefly under the piazzas of the houses, which thus afford coolness at such times and a shelter in those of rain.

As a whole, the town seemed dull and lifeless; for the grass grew, and the drifted sand-heaps rose high in the quaint old Spanish-looking thoroughfares.

The aspect of the place depressed Lennard's spirit, and his ideas of the majesty of Mexican law were not enhanced when he saw in the very centre of the principal street a man lying dead on his back pierced by three revolver bullets—a gaily dressed *arriero*, or muleteer, shot in some quarrel, and left there till his friends or the *alguazils* found time to take him away ere the *sopilotes* came with their ravenous beaks at nightfall.

Half pausing, Lennard regarded this sight with astonishment.

"How now," said an *alguazil*; "is no one ever killed in your country, that you look so white and strange?"

"Move on, hombre mio," said another, giving him a push with his baton, or staff.

"Why hurry the poor picaro?" cried a lame lepero; "don't you see how he drags his right leg after the left?"

"True," said another of the crowd; "he has certainly had his dancing marred by a chain and cannon ball in the mines of Potosi."

These remarks were unheeded by Lennard, who at that time really felt a little lameness consequent to the wound he had received from the air-gun and the marshy atmosphere of the swamp of Gallega.

After a little time he was freed from the annoyance of the crowd, when the officers of justice conducted him through the vestibule, and into the spacious hall of the Casa del Ayuntamiento, or Town-house; and he speedily found himself at the bar, and before one of the magistrates, who, though he knew it not, was Don Juan Leonardo, who was about to examine him, chiefly from motives of curiosity, prior to a more formal trial in a criminal court; so the proceedings that ensued were somewhat like those which little Mr. Dabchick, in his legal jargon, would have termed "a precognition;" yet such as they were, Lennard Blair's life or liberty seemed to hang on the issue.

He looked earnestly at the alcalde, who occupied a high chair at a desk which was covered with papers. Don Juan was past fifty years of age, and though thin and spare in figure, was still strikingly handsome.

His forehead was high and thoughtful ; the temples were somewhat indented ; his nose was a fine aquiline, and he had thick black moustaches well curled up at each end in the old Spanish fashion. His eyes were a rich dark hazel, and had in them a kind and earnest—some thought, a sad—expression, while his manner was pleasing and his voice mellow and winning.

Lennard thought that his face dreamily reminded him of some of the antique portraits at Blairavon, and he felt that he had everything to hope for from such an examiner, for Don Juan possessed a gentleness and suavity, a well-bred air that seemed a remnant of other times, of an older day, when deportment and grace were the study of a gentleman, and when the free and easy *brusquerie* of the present age was unknown.

“I am willing to hear all you have to say, prisoner,” said Don Juan, with a slight bow ; “but beware how you say aught that may criminate yourself—this being but a preliminary examination.”

When a young man, who seemed to officiate as a clerk to the court, read the charges, which we give, as follows, omitting the reiterated dates and legal prolixity of the paper, Lennard obtained a speedy clue to the entire mystery.

“Senor Alcalde, the prisoner Lennard Blair, a British subject, but nevertheless amenable to the laws of Mexico, landed here exactly this day five months ago, from the English steamer *Valparaiso*.”

(The start of surprise which Lennard gave on

hearing this strange announcement, did not escape the notice of the alcalde.)

"There are before you the documentary proofs of no less than three forgeries committed by him in this city—two on the Bank of Vera Cruz, and one on the firm of Leonardo and Co.; of his subsequent leaguings with banditti, and being present with them at two robberies of the mail—one on the road to Xalappa, and the other on the road to Tampico. In the last affair, a planter named Sebastian el Ranchero was stabbed to death by a knife, which weapon is now before you, and bears the name of 'Lennard Blair' on the handle. It was found near the dead body, as can be proved by competent witnesses, who are in the ante-room, and ready for examination. Of the actual crime of assassination some proofs are yet required; but Don Salvador Gonzalez assures me they shall speedily be forthcoming. To evade punishment for these misdemeanours the prisoner would seem to have fled, but was detected by Don Ignacio Saavedra, on board the steamer from Cuba, *Neustra Senora del Guadalupe*, having had the hardihood to return, within three weeks after committing the outrage on the road to Tampico."

The *Valparaiso* !

It was by that identical steamer *Travice Cheatwood* had sailed from Liverpool to South America. in Lennard's name, and with so much of his property.

"So—so," thought he, "my evil genius is here—even here !"

"Señor Alcalde," he began impetuously, "there is

an absurd mistake in all this; I did not land here or anywhere else from the *Valparaiso*——”

“His name—Lennard Blair—was on all his baggage, which was conveyed from that ship to a venta in the city,” continued the clerk; “and even on his linen, the same name which appears on this blood-stained weapon.”

Here the clerk held up a clasp-knife, which Lennard immediately recognised as having been his own.

“Here also is a letter of credit, given by the Señores Vere and Company, of Liverpool, which supplied him with funds till he betook him to forgery. It ends, ‘quedo rogando á Dios me garde su vida muchos anos, *John Vere and Co., Liverpool.*’”

As Lennard listened, he knew that the letter in question—one written by himself, and signed by Mr. Vere—must also have been found among the baggage with which Cheatwood had absconded; and perceiving that the magistrate was regarding him with a lowering eye, he naturally became both anxious and exasperated.

“Señor Alcalde,” said he, “I am a British subject, ignorant of your laws here in Mexico, nor caring to learn them, but most earnest in my desire not to break them. I have not done so, nor could I by any human possibility have done so, being arrested the instant the steamer came alongside yonder pier—even before I had placed my foot on South American soil. It is my misfortune to be arraigned before you under a misconception, which can easily

be explained ; but, first, I demand the presence and protection of Her Britannic Majesty's Consul."

"He has neither the power nor the will to protect forjadores or assassins; moreover, your case has already been before him."

"I deny that I am the person who committed these crimes!"

"Do you deny that you gave your name to the captain of the Cuban steamer, whose list of passengers was verified by the Custom-House officers ere he sailed for Tampico?"

"My name is Lennard Blair, I admit; but, it has been assumed by another; for at the time the *Valparaiso* arrived here, and when that very letter of credit was presented, I was in Liverpool waiting my passage by the next steamer, *The Golden Dream*, having to visit Vera Cruz on the business of our house; and I demand that Luke Maynard, captain of that vessel, the survivors of the *Gaviota*, a gentleman named José Saavedra and a lady named Dora Dominga, be examined in my behalf to prove my identity, otherwise these proceedings and my detention are an outrage upon everything judicial—a farce and a cruelty."

"You ask rather too much—at least, more than we can afford you," replied Don Juan, who was not displeased by Lennard's boldness, till his daughter's name was mentioned, when he coloured visibly and angrily, all the more so that there was a tender inflection detectable in the young man's voice as he uttered it. "The survivors of the crew of the

Gaviota have the best personal reasons for avoiding the hands of our alguazils, and are we know not where. *The Golden Dream* has not returned to these seas; the agents here inform us that, after her voyage back from Vera Cruz, she was taken into dock at Liverpool, and, of course, her crew are scattered beyond our reach."

"Then, señor," said Lennard, who was left to act as his own counsel, "the captain and crew of the Cuban steamer can prove that they took me off an island in the gulf."

"True—yet that would not disprove your being the committer of the outrages alleged; but she has gone from Tampico back to Cuba thrice since your arrest, so her crew may be changed, and anyway she will not be here for a month."

"Señor," urged Lennard, who found to his surprise that his examination had taken the form of a mere colloquy between himself and the alcalde; "can it be, that you will hear witnesses against me without having one summoned in my favour. Here in Vera Cruz must be two persons at least who can prove my innocence and identity—the señor Saavedra and his god-daughter Donna Dora. But, ere the day of trial comes, I shall demand the assistance of an abogado—to counsel me for my defence."

"Señor José Saavedra has gone by the steamer to Tampico this morning."

"Every one seems to have gone somewhere, or to be missing," said Lennard, bitterly.

"And the lady you have named must not appear here, if we can avoid it," added Don Juan, haughtily.

"Yet I saved her life in the Arenas—her life for which I would freely have risked my own!" exclaimed Lennard, with a burst of emotion, of which the magistrate studiously took no notice, but said—

"You speak Spanish somewhat fluently for an Englishman?"

"I am a Scotsman, Señor Alcalde, and to any Scotsman who knows Latin as taught in his native schools, the Spanish language proves an easy one."

The magistrate looked at Lennard with a keener interest, and said—

"I was in Scotland once, but that was long, long ago; thus I would befriend you, if possible, for the mere memory of that time. However, the ends of justice must be answered. Bring in the bank clerks to whom the forged bills were presented, that they may be interrogated."

Three young men, all of colour, were now summoned in succession by name, and each after the other was solemnly sworn over two crossed sword-blades in the old Castilian fashion, and requested to identify the prisoner; but they completely failed to do so. They differed as to his height, but agreed that the presenter of the bills was fair-haired, with a yellow moustache and square goatee-beard.

"The prisoner's hair may have been dyed," suggested the escribano.

"Scarcely, in the castle of San Juan," said the alcalde, smiling.

"But the other man's eyes were of a light colour, almost green; he could not dye *them*," said one clerk.

"Moreover, Señor Alcalde," added another, with that suavity of manner peculiar to all half-bloods, "the presenter of the bills was totally ignorant of Spanish, which we hear the prisoner speaks fluently."

Lennard felt intensely grateful to these young men.

An arriero, or muleteer, swore to finding the dead body of Sebastian el Ranchero (the farmer) and the knife now produced; but further proofs of who actually committed the crime were now required.

"If I dare not demand, at least permit me to entreat, Señor Alcalde, that the Señor José Saavedra be examined on oath, if not the—the—young lady. He must prove that I am the Lennard Blair who came with him from Liverpool, and had the honour to befriend him more than once. He must be ignorant of the dreadful condition to which I have been reduced, and she—she, too, must also be ignorant—at least—I hope so," he added in a broken voice, "otherwise they had not abandoned me as they would seem to have done. I repeat to you, that I am the only and true Lennard Blair who came to Vera Cruz as administrador for Vere & Co., of Liverpool, from whence I sailed on the 24th of November

last year; and that the other is an impostor named Travice Cheatwood, who robbed me and sailed by the *Valparaiso* in my name, all of which can be proved by communicating with Mr. Vere, or the authorities in England."

As Lennard spoke, Don Juan had been regarding him with a strange interest. His moustache, though untrimmed, did not conceal the perfect shape of a cleanly cut mouth, which was of a form remarkably handsome—even delicate for a man—and its short upper lip quivered occasionally with suppressed emotion and just indignation.

"I sincerely hope that all you assert may be proved," said the alcalde; "and that the ends of justice may be quite fulfilled; on the day of trial I shall have the Señor Saavedra, and even the young lady you have named, produced in court——"

"For that promise I thank you!" exclaimed Lennard, as he thought in his heart, "I shall see her once again — even though for the last time!"

"I repeat that this is but a preliminary examination. The proofs that we have waited for cannot now be long in arriving; till then I have no resource but to remand you again to the castle of San Juan de Ulloa."

Lennard started forward; he was about to make some earnest and forcible appeal against being sent back to that horrible place of detention; but this was quickly frustrated or anticipated by the quaintly-attired alguazils, who were evidently accus-

tomed to such outbreaks and attempts, for they roughly and at once pulled him away, and another hour saw him in his former cell.³ Well-nigh hopeless now, careless and reckless of the future, and feeling no impatience even for the day of trial which might change his miserable career, either by death or liberty—death by the iron collar of the garotte—for the sullen obduracy of martyrdom was beginning to possess him, and his once light and buoyant spirit had vanished.

CHAPTER XXV.

TRAVICE CHEATWOOD REDIVIVUS.

THOUGH Lennard knew it not, at the very moment when his taciturn warder was securing by a ponderous bolt the door of his white vaulted chamber, the stars were becoming favourable to him.

Don Juan who had been propitiously impressed by the earnestness of the young man's bearing, and the bold energy with which he maintained his innocence, was perplexed, however, to hear him assert that he had known and befriended Saavedra, and that he had saved the life of Dora, circumstances to which, for reasons already given, neither had ever referred.

Resolving to discover what these assertions on one hand, and the concealment of such facts on the other meant, he was just leaving the town-house and about to mount his horse, when Captain Salvador Gonzalez galloped up and dismounting in haste said,—



"I must crave a word with you, Señor Don Juan. My lieutenant and his detachment have just come in from the mountains, and he has brought me some remarkable evidence concerning this ubiquitous and double Lennard Blair, who seems to have been in England and Mexico, on sea and land at one and the same time."

"Indeed," replied the surprised alcalde; "the person whom I have just remanded to the castle opposite, asserts most stoutly that he came from Liverpool in the same steamer with my daughter, whom he only knows as Donna Dora, and with José Saavedra, to both of whom he rendered services of importance, yet neither have ever mentioned such circumstances to me. Donna Dora may have forgotten all about them during her long illness; but Saavedra was actually this young man's most bitter enemy." •

Don Juan spoke angrily, for he knew not as yet their reasons for this singular reticence.

"The young fellow is perfectly innocent; we have taken him for himself, and yet mistaken him for another."

"A paradox Gonzalez."

"These papers will explain all."

"I am glad of it!" exclaimed Don Juan; "I thought there was something fine about the lad—strange it is—a namesake, too," he added, ponderingly.

"In one of the barrancas on the eastern slope of the Coffre de Perote," began the officer, "my men

surrounded the last remains of the *quadrilla de picaros* who have frequented the highways, eight in number, and knocked them all over by a volley from their rifles. When retiring, in a species of wigwam formed of palm-leaves and sugar-canes, they found two more of the party dying of mortal wounds, which they had received in a very singular manner. Having met a woman of the *Puebla de Perote*, who was returning from market after selling four *arrobas* of coffee, and knowing that she must have the proceeds about her person, they demanded her money. One of them, an Englishman, doing so with a knife in his hand, and apparently resolved to use it too; for he was starving of hunger, and infuriated by *chinguirito*, or sugar-cane spirits.

"The *poblana* was a woman of half Indian blood, and having the subtlety to dissemble, she said,—

"'Señores, I have sold but four *arrobas* of coffee——'

"'We saw you taking it to market on a mule. One hundredweight of fine coffee must have produced something,' said the other robber, who proved to be *Trebucio Trocadero*, a man of bad repute round all the Gulf of Mexico.

"'All the poor *arrobas* produced are in my boddice, señores,' whined the woman; 'and if you will lend me a knife wherewith to cut the seams, you shall have it, even to the last quartil.'

"The unwary Englishman gave her his knife;

but, instead of turning its point towards her own boddice, she stabbed him in the region of the heart; then, quick as lightning, she dashed the weapon into the throat of Trocadero, and leaving it there, fled, shrieking towards the puebla.

"These were the men my soldiers found in the barranca, lying under the shelter of a few palm-leaves for coolness, and they were dying. The Englishman, who was a timid fellow, declared, with tears in his eyes, that he had no intention of using his knife against the poblana, but merely desired to frighten her into the surrender of her purse, an avowal which drew upon him the bitter execrations of the revengeful Trocadero, till the violence of the latter's emotion half choked him with blood.

"The dying Englishman now announced in very broken Spanish (and my lieutenant took his words in writing) that his real designation was Travice Cheatwood, a native of Liverpool in Britain; that he had come hither under the assumed name of the Lennard Blair who is now a prisoner in the castle of San Juan; that he had robbed the said Blair, and assumed his place in the steamer *Valparaiso*—in every point corroborating the story and asserting the innocence of the person you have just remanded. He declared himself, however, to be guiltless of the assassination of Sebastian the Ranchero, who had fallen by the hand of a Yucataco. This and other parts of his confession, which he has signed, and which also bears the signature of Trebucio Trocadero, in

articulo mortis, show that he felt the greatest contrition for his misspent life. Both men died that night, and my soldiers buried them in a hole by the wayside, piling up stones to save their remains from the jaguars, and setting up a wooden cross to mark the place. This is the document," concluded the officer, placing a paper in the hands of Don Juan, over whose pale face a flush of eagerness and satisfaction spread, as he said hurriedly,—

"This must at once be laid before the Corregidor, and his order obtained for the young gentleman's release!"

"My lieutenant says that the man Travice Cheatwood was fair-haired, with a square-cut beard, exactly answering the description given of him by the bank clerks and others who saw him after landing from the *Valparaiso*, while he whom I arrested on board the Cuban steamer is tall and dark, with a brown moustache."

"And, now, señor, to repair the wrong we have done him."

"If possible."

"How?"

"By the shame of arrest we may have ruined him for life—blasted his prospects in trade!" said the officer, regretfully.

"Dios no quiero—I hope not!" exclaimed Don Juan, as they rode off together in search of the Corregidor; "I shall get a warrant for his release,

and have him brought to my office in the city till we consider what can be done with him. The authorities—ourselves included—have committed a most unfortunate mistake!”

CHAPTER XXVI.

LENNARD À LA MEXICAINE.

LENNARD, seated once more in his white-walled and low-arched chamber, gazing listlessly through the grated window on the flat marshes of Gallega, knew nothing of the turn his fortune was taking, or of the dark tragedy which had closed the life of him whom he aptly termed his evil genius, now lying uncoffined in unconsecrated earth—buried like a dog—and sharing the same grave with the horrible Trocadero in that lonely ravine on the slope of the stupendous Coffre de Perote.

“Remanded again to prison,” he was whispering to himself; “remanded, and for how long?”

So full was he of bitter thoughts, so oppressed by the gloomy prospects of his position, so disappointed that after his long detention and all the interrogations he had undergone, he should find himself consigned to the same place for an unknown period, that he did not hear the massive door unclosed or the horrid clatter of its external iron bar; he took

heed of nothing till a hand was laid on his shoulder. He started as if from sleep, and looked up to see one of the alguazils in his quaint costume, which, save that it was all black, somewhat resembled in fashion that which Ancient Pistol wears upon the stage.

This person briefly informed him, to his utter bewilderment, that he was—free!

That the full confession of the real culprit was in the hands of the Corregidor, and that he had come to conduct him to the presence of the alcalde, who again desired to see him.

Lennard did not comprehend all this; but he could understand, with a gasp of joy, that he was now a free man.

“Free! let follow what may, I am free—God be thanked!” he exclaimed, and was in such haste to leave, that he forgot even to bid adieu to his taciturn warder.

Again he left San Juan by its principal gate, crossed the canal, or wet fosse, and again found himself in the same boat, being rowed towards the city, while the alguazil once more endeavoured to explain how all this came to pass, and politely enough congratulated him on his restoration to liberty and honour.

A great revulsion of feeling was caused by all this. The mental gloom vanished; the sunshine danced more brightly on the water now than it had ever seemed to do, when viewed from yonder frowning mass of towers and batteries. The ships with their

flags looked more gay; even sombre Vera Cruz seemed to grow livelier in aspect; and with something akin to curiosity, interest, wonder, or pity, he could now survey the motley crowds which he had seen before at the landing-place, and in the principal street, through which he was conducted to the Calle de San Sebastian, and there ushered into the office of Don Juan, who was seated at a desk, in a luxuriantly furnished chamber, which, with all its elegance, still evinced that it was unmistakably a place for business, by the shelves of day-books and ledgers, the japanned tin boxes, dockets of letters on the tables, the files of the *Diario*, maps of Cuba, Honduras, Spanish calendars, and so forth, which hung on the gaily papered walls.

On ushering him in, the alguazil, as if his duty was over, bowed politely and retired.

"I meet you under happier and better auspices than we did some two hours since, Señor Lennard," said the alcalde pleasantly, while presenting his hand, with a broad smile on his handsome and usually grave face; and then he drew forward a chair for his somewhat bewildered visitor.

"The alguazil has explained much to me, señor," said the latter; "but I should like a further detail of all this rather fatal mistake from yourself."

"That you shall have, and speedily; but first you must have some refreshment—you look pale and fatigued."

"I thank you, señor—I have indeed undergone much mental suffering," said Lennard, with a sigh.

"Wine—and quickly," said Don Juan to a black servant, who answered his hand-bell.

"You came here to found a branch of the house of Vere & Co., of Liverpool?"

"Yes—and to inquire into the misdeeds of a certain merchant captain named Trocadero."

The alcalde regarded the young man for a few moments with grave interest, and said—

"Another time we shall talk over these things; you have suffered too much to be annoyed by business matters at present; so, meantime, take your wine. I am that Juan Leonardo with whom you so often corresponded. You always wrote me in Spanish, in lieu of Mr. Envoyse, signing, as I remember, '*L. B. por Vere & Co.*'"

"Yes."

"How little could we then foresee that we should meet as we have done! so, Señor Lennard, as we are almost namesakes, I am interested in you, and as I once knew a family of your name—but that was long, long ago—I shall do my best to befriend you."

"I thank you gratefully," replied Lennard, with a swelling sensation in his heart.

"We owe you many apologies for our rough treatment, which is not calculated to impress you favourably with our people in Vera Cruz; and as the signer of the warrant by which Gonzalez arrested you, none owe you a greater amende perhaps than I; but grave suspicions were abroad, and the similarity in name coupled you with the person who

had assumed yours. Hence all these mistakes, which are fully explained now. You are free, and I shall be happy—honoured, indeed, by a visit from you at my villa (which is some miles from town), in token that you forgive the past. Though I have almost forgotten my own language amid the perpetual use of Spanish, I am, like yourself, by birth a Briton, and should like to have a long, long talk about the old country.”

“Don Juan, thanks indeed for all this kindness. I shall visit you with pleasure; but will not the disgrace of my arrest seriously affect the interests of Vere & Co. in the business community here?”

“Scarcely—but of that anon,” said Don Juan, with an inexplicable and—as Lennard thought—rather unpleasant smile; “after dinner this evening we shall talk over all that, and see what can be done for you. As you lost everything when the *Gaviota* was wrecked among the Arenas, a few doubloons cannot be unacceptable now,” he added, writing for Lennard a cheque for a handsome sum on the Bank of Vera Cruz. “The barber and tailor must do the rest,” he continued laughing; “for at present you are rather wild in aspect and dilapidated in costume. One of my clerks shall accompany you through the city. Return at five, when the carriage will be here to take us into the country; till then, adios, señor.”

Invigorated by a glass or two of excellent wine—a beverage which he had never tasted while incarcerated in San Juan—feeling happy in the confi-

dence of perfect freedom, and that once again he would be enabled, under admirable auspices, to turn his attention resolutely to work as of old—he resolved to lose no time in having his attire replaced by one more suitable, his visage shorn of its hirsute appendages, and his tangled locks reduced to their usual length ; but the clerk evinced great disgust of the duty assigned to him, in guiding one he deemed a scarecrow through the principal streets of the city.

During Blair's absence Don Juan sat for some time at his desk, full of reflection.

He thought he could now see the motive of the elder Saavedra for concealing all knowledge of the real Lennard Blair, and even for blackening his character so industriously in public and in private. It was to further his nephew's suit and was thoroughly Spanish in some of its features.

But then there was Dora—why was she silent? Had they ever met or been intimate in England?

He resolved to question Lennard ; but meant to do so with some address and circumspection, lest he might compromise the name of his daughter.

“If,” thought he, “there has been—as I strongly suspect, any tenderness between Dora and this young man during their long sea voyage—and what could be more likely, when she is so charming? I shall certainly keep her at her aunt's convent till he quits Vera Cruz for England, or to join a firm in Cuba, to which I shall give him a letter of introduction. Saavedra has perhaps seen more than he dare tell

me, and Dora feels more than she cares to admit; and hence her silence—perhaps her illness. Poor girl! she may have suffered deeply! This must all be seen to, and our young waif sent out of Vera Cruz at any price. I should like to study his character, though. He is unfortunate—more than he actually knows; and—I—I was poor myself once.”

So thought Don Juan, with knitted brows; forgetting that “the best-laid schemes of mice and men” are often baffled in the sequel.

Dora, too, was the subject of Lennard’s deepest thoughts, and he longed to learn from Don Juan who and where she was. However, he was not without an emotion of decided pique at her for having neglected him, or for having, to all appearance, committed his wrongs—perhaps his memory—to oblivion. He should certainly question this merchant, Leonardo—an assumed name, by the way, if the latter was an Englishman—on the first suitable occasion; but some tidings which he received from that gentleman concerning affairs at home almost eclipsed for a time his pique at Dora, by giving him cause for serious considerations of another kind.

Punctually at five in the evening, he presented himself at the office of Don Juan, where stood the magnificent carriage in which, though he knew it not, his own Dora had been so recently driven to the Guadaloupe convent, and the cushions and silken lining of which were still redolent of the perfume of her dress; and as they drove off the merchant was much amused and greatly pleased by the change

affected in Lennard's appearance. He wore a very handsome dress: a black velvet jacket, trimmed with silver on the breast and sleeves; bullion wings on the shoulders; a gay scarlet sash and double pantaloons, the outer being slashed up the side with rows of tiny bell buttons; a sombrero, with a broad scarlet satin ribbon floating from it over his right arm. His dark hair was cut short, and his face entirely shaven of all save his thick and well-pointed moustache. Thus no one could have recognised in him the seedy and tattered fellow whom the angry and blushing clerk had guided through the streets of the city.

"Bravo—you are quite à la Mexicaine!" exclaimed Don Juan, laughing at the metamorphosis.

Ere two days were past Dora had read the whole affair in the *Diario*, which had a column on the subject, and concluded by stating "that Mr. Lennard Blair was at present the guest of Don Juan Leonardo whose eccentric, but perhaps pardonable sympathy for the English, particularly shipwrecked sailors, had frequently been remarked in Vera Cruz. All the statements made by the ill-used young gentleman—for whose sufferings H.B.M. Consul was inconsolable—are, we understand, fully corroborated by his particular friend, Señor José Saavedra, with whom he travelled from England."

"Oh, why did my coward heart shrink from defending him—why commit his name and love to silence? Lennard—Lennard—mi vida! mi alma!" she exclaimed, amid a gust of tears and grief, as she

replaced his ring on her engaged finger, and kissed it again and again, regardless of all that her kind, but somewhat austere aunt could urge on the impropriety of such proceedings, over which she thoughtfully smoked more than one cigarito, after the manner of all married and elderly dames in the land of Montezuma.

Dora's heart began to dance again with delight. Lennard was free, and innocent—she was certain he would prove so in the end—but to be the guest of “her own papa,” was beyond her expectations! Could such happiness last for ever? But she blushed for herself when reflecting that much of the frankness and candour which a three years' residence in Europe had developed in her really impulsive and generous nature, had become chilled under the local influences of her Mexican home, and those prudish ideas of etiquette and punctilio which the Moors have engrafted on the Spaniards, and thus cause a Spanish girl to tremble in her heart lest her friends should learn that she loves, or is beloved. Thus the piquante little Dora—of the Preston Station—of the saucy hat, Balmoral boots and reefing jacket, with anchor buttons, had become a veritable Mexican donna again!

That diminutive gentleman, José Saavedra, also saw the *Diario*, when over his coffee one morning in a venta at Tampico; and he twisted his long moustaches up to his ears, while treading the paper under his heel. Aware how treacherously he had acted, he resolved to protract his absence for some weeks,

till the affair might perhaps be forgotten, or Lennard Blair should have left Vera Cruz. Great was the surprise, and greater still the disgust of his nephew, Don Ignacio, on learning that one whom he fully knew to be a favoured rival, was actually located in the Villa Leonardo, if that lying print, the *Diario*, was to be trusted!

But he consoled himself by saying in the cafés, on the Alameda and other places of public resort,

“Rich as Don Juan is—I must cut his acquaintance. Par todos los demonios! One can’t know people who pick up their friends in the castle of San Juan. The little girl is all very well; but would be nothing without the doubloons of her papa.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

A SHOCK AND A PROPOSAL.

TO Lennard the change from the monotony of his seclusion in San Juan, the drive through the open country from Vera Cruz, after the somewhat gloomy streets and drifted red sand-heaps of the latter were left behind, proved very delightful.

The barren district around the city once passed, pretty Indian villages came in view, nestling amid trees and flowers—the huts of slender yellow bamboo canes being roofed by broad leaves now withered and brown. Around towered green groves of the palm, the plaintain and banana, under the cool and dewy shade of which, flocks of goats with silky hair, white as the driven snow, were browsing. The whole country was covered with verdure, trees, and flowers, the latter in every variety of blossom, filling the earth below, and the air above with fragrance; for magnificent and wondrous parasitical creepers had been garlanded by nature's hand from branch to branch in the most fantastic forms.

As the carriage swept past, the Indian women with their long, black, and glittering eyes, their parti-coloured skirts, and dingy little ones slung on their backs, came rushing out of their wigwams to clap their hands; others who sat at the doors, weaving green garlands and bright bouquets for the shrine of our Lady of Guadalupe, or some local saint, would look quietly up and smile, showing a row of dazzling teeth.

Flowers—flowers were everywhere, and amid a district where the fields of maize, sugar, and coffee were bordered by hedges of great scarlet blossoms,—by bell-shaped lilies of exquisite fragrance, with petals that were purple or white, where trees of double pink roses lined the highway, and a stupendous mountain scenery with blue and distant peaks, the Cordilleras of Anahuac, formed the background,—the carriage soon brought them to the villa Leonardo, which has been described in a preceding chapter; but the vastness, the palatial aspect and luxury of which, impressed Lennard with a high idea of the great wealth of his new friend.

Its magnificent sala; its chambers, the walls of which were charmingly painted with religious subjects; the cabinets of ebony and other fine wood elaborately inlaid with silver and gold; the marble floors, the variety of rich and elegant objects—more than all, the bedroom which was assigned him, with its draperies of white muslin and rose-coloured silk; its cedarwood floor, and roof painted light-blue and starred with silver; the lofty open

windows, through which the breeze of evening came from the Cordilleras laden with the perfumes of a thousand flowers; the bed itself, with its blue silk coverlet, richly laced pillows, and closely fitting mosquito curtains, all struck Lennard forcibly, especially after the squalor of his white little cell in the castle of San Juan de Ulloa; and he was excessively impressed, too, by his own figure as reflected in the tall cheval mirror, where he could contemplate his full length in that striking costume *à la Mexicaine*.

Had Lennard looked much about the drawing-room, he would have found many a trace of her he longed for: music and books on which her name was written at full length; her album of photographs; a portrait of herself painted in England and sent out to Don Juan a year ago. It hung in a conspicuous place; but was now covered with muslin to protect it from insects.

Dinner over—and it was a sumptuous one: the display of silver plate, crystal, and flowers seemed a glimpse of fairyland; the soup was wonderful, the fish delicious, the entrées and patés hot with red *chilé* and *recherche*; the champagne and pine-apple ice cold as if they had come direct from Baffins Bay. Don Juan and Lennard betook them to cigars and claret, and then gradually the former began to talk of business; for he had much to impart to his visitor—much that might pain him, and should be done gently.

“So we are, as I said this morning, namesakes,

señor," said Don Juan, while pondering how he might introduce what he had to impart.

"Nearly," said Lennard bowing.

"More nearly than you think; for Leonardo is but another version of Lennard; they are identically the same name."

"True, señor—of course," said Lennard, smiling, and wondering if such was the name borne by his host in his own country and before he became so thoroughly à l'*Espagnole*.

"Hence I feel bound to befriend you if I can. In Mexico the ties of blood are strong in families, and thus the similitude of name should have some weight."

"I thank you, Don Juan. With regard to one of my express commissions here, now as Trebucio Trocadero is dead——"

"Pardon an interruption, I did not wish to spoil the first good dinner you have had for many a day—(I pay my French cook fifty dollars per month; and after the garbanzos, plaintains, and garlic messes of San Juan, I trust you found his efforts pleasing); but now, over our wine and cigars, you must, I regret to say, prepare yourself to hear something very unpleasant, and of which you seem to be in perfect ignorance."

"Dora is married—married or dead!" thought Lennard, and his heart died within him, while he gazed breathlessly into the long, grave face of the speaker.

"So far as concerns Trocadero, there can be no doubt that the ships being old and worthless, Mr. Vere bribed him to scuttle them when in ballast or with sham cargoes, to save the insurances."

"Bribed him!" exclaimed Lennard, astonished to find some of his suspicions corroborated here. "Was he capable of such an act?"

"Yes; and of worse than that," was the curt rejoinder.

"That they were in secret correspondence, I had ocular proof by the fragment of a letter when on board the *Golden Dream*."

"All these details are valueless, señor; and it matters little whether Vere & Co. were cognisant of those nefarious acts in the Bahama Channel and elsewhere, as they are bankrupt now."

"What, Don Juan, has our house stopped payment?" exclaimed Lennard aghast.

"Stopped payment, amigo mio! I should think so and worse," replied his host, lighting a fresh cigar.

"What could be worse than that?"

"A rotten bankruptcy—rotten to the very core; no assets or anything. The claret-jug stands with you. Take another cigar," said Don Juan kindly, as he pushed towards Lennard a case on wheels—a miniature temple of silver, full of cigars, and labelled in blue enamel, "Lugerdita—El Diabolo Marino—Flor perla Cubano," and so forth.

"When did this happen?" asked Lennard, in a low voice.

"More than two months ago."

"But what brought such a catastrophe to pass?"

"Oh, the old, old story!" replied Don Juan, while Lennard felt his heart grow very sick indeed. "Many were the reasons alleged: sums drawn out of their hands suddenly by cautious individuals, tightness of the money-market, difficulty in the negotiations of loans to meet emergencies; losses by sea—particularly in the Bahama Channel; bad debts in Costa Rica; every mercantile excuse under the sun."

"When I left Liverpool for Scotland in the early part of last year, all seemed sound enough."

"The truth is, Mr. Vere is an admirable example of those mushroom financiers, who of late years have disgraced the English mercantile world, and who, while wallowing in gold, somehow suddenly smash, and have no dividend to pay."

"Oh, what is all this you tell me?" exclaimed Lennard, with growing excitement. "Every shilling I had in the world, amounting to some thousand pounds, I invested in Vere's hands."

"Sorry to hear it, amigo mio—sorry to hear it," replied Don Juan, gravely. "I am old enough to be your father, and know that I tell you but the often told tale, for I can see it all—the game that is without a chance of success for such as you, where treachery and guile on one side, are opposed to manly integrity on the other. The devil, unseen, always puts his ugly paw into the wrong scale."

Failed—ruined—was it indeed so? He shrunk

from the conviction that such should be the case, for there are events which seem too fearful to be possible, and, to Lennard Blair, who had embarked his little all in the firm of Vere & Co., this was one of these.

Miss Hesbia Vere was married, he understood Don Juan to say. Well, he could hear *that* with tolerable indifference now, and he could remember her last words when they parted never to meet again. To be rejected for Crowdy—the pale and cadaverous Crowdy—was a wound for which he had found a balm; but to be so completely duped by the smooth-tongued and smiling Vere, was exasperating. These, then, were the impending calamities which Mr. Envoye had hinted he “was pretty well in the dark about.” All his delusions were at an end. He had been jilted by a flirt, jewed by a swindler, and was now in a foreign land, penniless, and worse perhaps, if considered as the representative of Vere & Co!

“My last investment in the firm—” Lennard was beginning in a cracked voice, for his throat was parched and dry.

“You do not seem to have ranked as a partner, which, under the circumstances, is perhaps fortunate now—nor even as a creditor. Not a trace of your name appeared in the books or proceedings, save as one of the clerks. I read the whole affair in the *Times*.”

Lennard drained a bumper of claret, and thought he must be dreaming.

"And the baronet's bubble company—the great steam-packet line, in which I was to have had shares——"

"Never existed ; or, if intended at all, was never developed, for Vere's insolvency and Crowdy's character as a swindler speedily became so. The total destruction by fire and water of some coal-mines in Scotland—a speculation on which Vere spent vast sums and much energy—was the culminating point of his growing misfortunes. Perhaps he did not mean ultimate fraud ; but his connection with a person like Sir Cullender finished all. The estate which he made over to his daughter, Lady Crowdy, has also come into the market."

"In the general wreck he might have had the humanity to spare the little remnant of my patrimony," said Lennard, whose thoughts went home to Oakwoodlee.

"What was its rental ?"

"About two hundred per annum."

Don Juan smiled.

"That sum," said he, "is a joke—a mere hollow gourd to a gold-nine, when compared with the involvements of others who have been similarly deluded. You are young, and have yet life and the wide world before you, and should thank your stars that, like old Mr. Abel Envoyse, who served the firm so long and faithfully, you have not a wife and little ones depending on your work for food, shelter, and raiment. The truth would seem to be that the firm had sustained many, many losses before you

left England, and had engaged in some of Sir Cul-ender's many London bubbles. As trustee for several persons, Vere had the power of using sums belonging to others—sums to which he had no right, but which he intended (let us hope) to replace if his speculations proved successful ; but each in its turn failed—the old story—so the crash came ! As I have said, no fraud might have been intended in the sequel, but in the Bankruptcy Court all sounded very like it."

"No fraud, Don Juan?" queried Lennard, impatiently.

"God forgive that I should say so, but it *must* have been intended, for double sets of books had been kept—books that were cooked up to the occasion, cut down, interleaved, and re-bound, to the utter confusion of all examination. But do you know that I hold nearly two thousand pounds' worth of your acceptances?"

"For Heaven's sake! do not say of mine, Don Juan."

"Dios no quiero! Well, of the firm of Vere, Cheatwood, and Co."

"A humble junior partner, as I deemed myself—a shareholder for a moderate sum—I have been cruelly deluded and kept in the dark."

"Mr. Vere has disappeared from Liverpool."

"And the baronet?"

"Was convicted as a fraudulent bankrupt, and he now employs his hours of seclusion in picking oakum. It was a case of mutual mistake; each looked to the

other's exchequer for release from pressing difficulties, and looked in vain."

"And—Sir Cullender's—wife?"

"On the very night when the baronet was sent to prison she eloped with a tenor singer; I read it all in the *Times* two months ago."

Lennard sighed over the dark future of the brown-eyed the bright-looking and once joyous Hesbia; and remained for some time crushed, perplexed, and lost in thought, until he became aware that Don Juan was speaking again.

"I said that I would befriend you, if I could; and, luckily, I have it in my power to do so, well," he was saying.

"I thank you, gratefully," sighed Lennard.

"I am going home to Britain; indeed, I have already transferred the most of what I possess to that country, where I have also bought an estate, in the possession of which I am deeply interested, for it belonged of old to my ancestors, and I was born upon it. Yet I shall leave behind unsold this plantation of Leonardo, that I may still retain some interest in South America, the land where I have made my fortune, and lived so long and happily. The villa I shall sell or let; but there is an excellent house on the brow of yonder barranca, and that shall be yours, if you choose to remain here as overseer of my property."

Lennard Blair sighed. It would be perpetual banishment too surely, a mere competence perhaps, and in a dangerous climate, for the yellow fever is

yearly the deadly scourge of Vera Cruz—the most brief stay there being often sufficient to give the contagion; but he knew that to remain was his only chance of discovering, perhaps of winning, his lost Donna Dora.

“In addition to a natural longing and desire to return home as years come upon me, I have cogent political reasons,” said Don Juan. “It is confidently rumoured that we are on the eve of a new insurrection, and that a portion of the Mexican Government, oddly enough, require the expulsion from this country of all Spaniards by birth, Europeans who have intermarried with Spaniards, and, in some instances, their children. So I mean to quit betimes.”

As if in a dream, Lennard retired that night to the luxurious bed-chamber provided for him. Reflection was a bitter resource, indeed; but he had no other left him.

Totally impoverished now, he was sinking into the character of a mere dependent on the patronage and bounty of Don Juan, and as such he was further removed by position from Donna Dora than he had been from the daughter of the wealthy Vere!

The proud sense of old family, of station, and unmerited degradation, which such inevitable ruin would have called up at home in the old country, under the irritating presence of successful turpitude or wealthy snobbery, could not be felt on the western side of the Atlantic—in the vast arena of the New World. He would begin his career again, and at once, with a resolute heart, even in the most humble

phase, without a blush, and work hard and diligently—but by such work would he ever win Dora?

He had lost all—all but that grim joke, the Charter Stone; and again, as when in the castle of San Juan, he laughed bitterly, in mockery of his own weak superstition and his father's too, in retaining the proprietary of it, instead of having it, as the wretched Tralice Cheatwood had once suggested, broken up for road-metal.

Swindled, penniless, abandoned in a far and foreign country; in danger of arrest, perhaps, for his complicity with the disastrous affairs of Vere and Co.!

It was anything but a pleasant situation. He drew the mosquito-curtains close, tossed feverishly on his richly-laced pillows, and strove to find oblivion in sleep.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A DAY OF SURPRISES.

BY next morning Lennard had made up his mind to take the friendly offer of Don Juan, in assuming the charge of his plantation, until something else "turned up," as the saying is. He meant also to prosecute his search for Donna Dora; but, on descending to the breakfast-room—where he found a morning meal spread quite in the English rather than the Mexican fashion, to wit, with a white table-cloth, a shining coffee-urn, fresh eggs, tea, toast and rolls, and, lying ready for his perusal, that morning's *Diario* and the Mexican daily paper, *La Gazeta del Gobierno*,—a black valet presented him with a note from Don Juan, apologizing for a two-days' absence at Tlacotalpan, a town sixty miles distant from Vera Cruz, on the river of Alvarado, whither he had been summoned by daybreak on pressing political business.

Left thus to his own resources, Lennard spent the whole day in riding over the grounds of the

hacienda, of which he fully believed he should ere long have the entire charge: but he wandered among fields of sugar-cane, maize, and coffee; among orange-groves covered with fragrant blossoms and golden fruit, bending lemon-trees, and where the rose, the jasmine, and the lily were ever blooming; listlessly, and with his mind full of all he had heard last night—the ruin that had come on others as well as himself; and he was not without great and genuine sorrow for Hesbia Vere, whose too probable future he shrank from contemplating.

But beyond this honest sorrow he felt nothing more; and he agreed with the writer who says,—“I hold it as a rule that nine men out of ten are unfortunate in their first attachments; and I hold it as another rule, that it is a very good thing for them that they are so.”

The evening drew on, and he spent it in the library, which he found well stocked with many Spanish and many more English works of the highest class; but next morning he began to long for the return of his host, that he might speak of the subject nearest his heart, and that some definite arrangement might be made and duties assigned him.

In the course of the second day he wandered into the drawing-room, where he found the usual unmistakable evidences of the residence of a lady in the mansion. The pretty creole Mencía, who flitted about from time to time, in no way averse to a conversation with this handsome young European,

could soon have satisfied his curiosity on this point; but Lennard had grown somewhat taciturn, and regardless of her glances and black glittering eyes, never addressed her.

The windows were open nearly from the lofty ceiling to the floor, which was of polished marble. The draperies, like those of the sala, were all of fine blue silk, edged with lace and silver. The fauteuils and couches were also of blue silk, of elegant designs, and of the most luxurious construction, while mirrors, crystal girandoles, glass shades and statuettes were there in profusion, on consoles of veined marble, on satin-wood tables and ebony cabinets inlaid with silver and mother-of-pearl.

The grand piano was locked; piles of music filled the stand near it, and from these Lennard instinctively wandered to a picture—a veiled one—that hung close by.

A veiled portrait always excites curiosity, and seems suggestive of some mystery—a story of sorrow, or love, or death; Lennard was alone; his host was still absent, and would probably be so for the rest of the day. There could be no impropriety in looking at the picture; so he withdrew the screen of gauze and beheld the portrait—a full-length cabinet size—of a beautiful, dark-eyed and golden-haired girl. She had the bright, smiling face of Dora—and Dora she was, beyond a doubt, in the very dress in which he had first seen her, on that hurried occasion at the Preston station; but without her piquante little hat

and feather, for her wealth of silky tresses flowed over the shoulders of her yachting jacket, in the pockets of which her hands were inserted.

It was the veritable Dora of the torn glove—and her portrait hung here—here in Don Juan's drawing room !

Absorbed in the contemplation of this picture, wondering much, that amid all their confidences, Don Juan had never referred to the circumstance of her existence, and curious to learn from the first domestic he met the exact relationship which the original of this portrait bore to him, Lennard was for a time lost in a maze of conjecture. Rejoicing that he had so suddenly found a clue to her discovery, he continued to gaze on the portrait till a light step roused him, a girlish figure in a white muslin dress sprang through the open window from the garden, and Dora—his own Dora—living and breathing, flushed with excitement and joy, threw herself into his arms, with passionate eagerness and hoydenish abandon !

Often in his dreams—in that white cell of yonder castle by the sea—had “their spirits rushed together at the meeting of the lips,” and now—now the emotion was realized.

“I knew I should find you here,” she exclaimed breathlessly ; “I read all about you in the *Diario* at the Guadaloupe convent, and then I could stay no longer there. I broke away from my aunt, obtained a hackney coach and, accompanied by the gardener,

a Dominican brother, drove home. And so we have you here—here in the Villa Leonardo;” she continued before Lennard could speak, twining her girlish arms round him, while her eyes were full of tears, “how much you have suffered—undergone—oh mi vida—mi vida—mi alma—you are all the world to me!”

“And I believed she had forgotten me?” thought Lennard with self-reproach.

Entwined in his and pressed against his heart, the fingers of her hand, felt its beating; and the perfume of her marvellous golden hair was about him, as her head dropped on his breast and for some minutes they were mutually and literally wrapt in a species of trance, “a love-cloud.”

She had not forgotten him; she was true and all could be easily explained. With loving glances her earnest eyes were upturned to his from time to time, her voice so full and rich met his ear in broken accents with half coherent expressions, and her lips trembled nervously when his touched them.

But their first burst and outpouring of joy and tenderness past, the time for questioning came, and for thinking of their relative positions, for while Lennard saw the signs of wealth—yea enormous wealth—on every side,—there fell on his heart something of the old paralyzing chill, that he had felt elsewhere and at another time.

“Did any two persons ever love each other so much as we do, Lennard?” asked Dora softly.

“No, darling—no,” he whispered in the blindness

of his faith and flush of his passion ; “ but how and where will it end, love—Dora ? ”

“ *Here* and on this spot ! ” said a stern voice that made them start, while a low cry escaped Dora, and with his grave face inflamed by anger, Don Juan, who had entered unperceived, whip in hand, with his riding-boots and the velvet cape of his serapé powdered with the dust of a long ride, stood before them. “ How comes it, señor,” he demanded, “ that I find you on these terms with my daughter ? ”

“ Your daughter, Don Juan—yours ? ” exclaimed Lennard, in a breathless voice, while the colour fled from his cheek, for there rushed upon his heart the icy conviction that he had met Dora but to lose her by a separation now and for ever, as she must go home to Britain, while he should remain in Vera Cruz, and perhaps without even the subsistence Don Juan had promised him. “ Your daughter,” he repeated, in a faltering voice ; “ I thought she was named——”

“ Dominga ; Saavedra told me of your misconception ; but she is Isidora Dominga Leonardo,” replied the angry Don Juan ; then Lennard recalled the words of the Franciscan chaplain of the prison-fortress, and found that by a series of odd chances he had never learned her entire name till now.

“ And how came it Donna Dora, that you have dared to leave the Guadaloupe Convent until I sent for you ? have you forgotten that you are in Mexico, and *not* in England ? ” asked Leonardo.

“ Oh, papa, I read in the *Diario*—that—that—

but pray, dear papa, forgive me; I shall never love any one else, and so shall never offend you again," said Dora, who had shrunk down on a sofa, covered with shame and confusion, while her hair fell forward in masses over her downcast face.

"From what Saavedra said, I suspected much," resumed Don Juan, still stern and lofty; "but I confess that this scene has gone quite beyond my expectance, and my patience, too. Dora follow me into another room. And you, señor, wait for me here, and I shall speak with you again."

"A duel!" thought Lennard, as the father and daughter withdrew. "Oh, he cannot mean that; even in this lawless country the idea would be absurd, considering the difference of our years, and the obligations under which he has placed me. Besides he is Dora's father, and no insult—no provocation should tempt me to meet him as an enemy."

In that moment of supreme joy, when they had met again, and in the fulness of his love for her, jealous pride and a conviction of their inequality of circumstances had been forgotten; but *now* came the reflection that he had humbled himself before her, suing to ask her love that he might be a dependant on her bounty and her father's wealth!

The idea was intolerable, and stung him to the soul! Alike humiliating and repugnant was the prospective chance that he should bluntly be required to quit the villa, with the insulting injunctions that he was never to enter it again, and never to see her more.

Even while these galling thoughts were passing through his mind, it was impossible for him not to overhear much that passed between Dora and her father in the adjoining apartment, the inner drawing-room, which was separated from the outer, merely by hangings of blue silk ; and, indeed, Don Juan seemed to care little whose ears his voice reached.

A Mexican by birth, educated as she had been, even with the better influences consequent to her three years' residence in Europe, Dora thought she had reason to feel great terror and shame on being discovered with a lover, for, until she is married, the young Mexican lady can converse privately with her brothers, uncles, her confessor, and her female friends *only*. "In fact," says the Señora Calderon de la Barca, in her charming travels, "young people have so few opportunities given them of being together, that Mexican marriages must be made in heaven, for I see no opportunities of bringing them about on earth. The young men when they meet with young ladies in society, appear devoted to and very much afraid of them. I know but *one* lady in Mexico who has the reputation of having manœuvred all her daughters into great marriages ; but they were such beauties that it can have cost her no trouble. As for flirtation, the name is unknown, and the thing also."

Certainly Dora had been permitted more freedom ; but to have a lover thus—it all came, as old Saavedra said, "of having lived among the heretical Inglesos."

Lennard could hear that Dora was weeping, while a lengthened and animated conversation, but in a low tone, ensued between her and her father.

After a time the latter suddenly raised his voice and said,—

“With all you tell me of the gratitude that we owe him, this state of matters must not be, and you shall remain in the Guadeloupe Convent until we leave this country, which must be soon now, as we are on the eve of a dangerous prononciamento (*i.e.*, revolution).”

“Oh, papa, forgive us—but he was so kind to me during the long voyage in the steamer;—no brother——”

“Could be more attentive. Very likely; I do not doubt it.”

“We became such friends,” she urged, with sobs.

“I don’t approve of chance friendships; understand me, Dora.”

“I will, if I can, dear papa.”

“You must and shall!” he rejoined impetuously; “You cannot love this mere stranger, whose introduction here has been so inauspicious. He has simply gained an influence over you, which in time you will forget, and perhaps blush for.”

“We are betrothed—plighted, papa; and then think of all that happened on that horrible island—how, as I have just told you, he saved my life at the risk of his own, for he was weak, weary, and unarmed, while Trocadero was strong, maddened with wine, and had pistols.”

"True, Dora; I shall thank and reward him—yea, love him for all that; but more I cannot do. What ring is that upon your finger?"

"A present, papa."

"From him—this Lennard Blair?"

"Yes, papa."

"Give it to me, instantly!"

Dora obeyed, evidently in tears and with reluctance; and Lennard felt his heart moved on one hand, and his fiery pride galled to madness on the other.

"A strange old-fashioned ring this," said Don Juan, as a flush mounted to his temples; "how, in Heaven's name, came he to be possessed of it."

"It was an heirloom in his family, dear papa, and was all he had to give me at the time."

"An heirloom!" said Don Juan, in a voice that was broken and most strangely unlike his own, as he drew back the hangings, and stood before Lennard with the trinket in his hand—a roughly-chased and well-worn old signet-ring, which had been worn by Richard Blair for many a year, and been with him in many a race and hunting-field. It had been *his* father's before him, and bore, on a blood-stone, a stag's-head *caboshed*, with the motto of the Blairs.

"Young gentleman, answer me truly," said Don Juan, in a nervous and anxious manner; "to whom did this ring which you bestowed upon my daughter belong?"

"To my father," replied Lennard, with much of angry pride, at his present humiliated position,

swelling in his heart and throat ; "to my poor old father, Richard Blair——"

"Of Blairavon and Oakwoodlee, in Lothian?"

"Yes," replied Lennard, amazed to hear the names of the old places mentioned thus, by a total stranger, in Vera Cruz.

"Blairavon is the name of the estate I have just purchased in Scotland——"

"You, Don Juan?" exclaimed Lennard.

"Yes—the estate of which I spoke to you the other evening. Your mother——"

"Has been dead for many a year."

"And your father, Richard Blair?"

"Died on the first of May last year."

"At Beltane—el dia primero de Mayo—the unlucky day of the family!"

"The day on which many things are said to have happened among us, and on which I had an uncle drowned—my father's younger brother, from whom I am named."

"Drowned?" said the other, with a start of surprise; "why boy, your uncle Lennard stands before you! I am he! John Lennard Blair; but, O Santos de los Santos!" he added, for they still spoke Spanish, as he took Lennard's hands kindly between his own, "this is an abrupt and heartstirring discovery—and it has come most singularly about! A Scotsman and a Blair too," he added, while his voice trembled and his eyes filled; "of what was I thinking, when I omitted to question you before this? But then I never heard of your birth—knew

not of your existence, or that my poor brother Dick ever had a family ; and our surname of Blair is far from being an uncommon one in the old northern kingdom. But, for reasons that are forgotten now, the name became hateful to me, and in a gust of anger and eccentricity I relinquished it, as I thought for ever."

Lennard gazed at Don Juan in a state of utter bewilderment ; and save for the veritable names and certain facts to which he referred so fitly, would have deemed him light-headed. But the explanation of all this must be reserved for another chapter.

CHAPTER XXIX.

UTOPIA.

“**A**ND you were not drowned in the little loch at Craigellon?” exclaimed Lennard, when the surprise of all three at these rapid discoveries had somewhat subsided.

“Drowned—no, not at all; I never thought of being so,” replied Don Juan.

“Who, then, was discovered by Steinie Hislop’s terrier among the reeds, twelve months after your disappearance, in the lochlet by the Craig, and was buried by my father in the old family tomb, and to whom was the mural slab erected by him on the wall of the village church?”

“That is more than I can tell you, nephew” (how odd this sounded!); “some benighted waif or tipsy wanderer most probably. However, by altering the date, the slab may serve my turn yet.”

“From Steinie Hislop and old Elsie Graham I partially learned, Uncle Lennard, of your unfortunate attachment and its sequel.”

Don Juan smiled sadly.

"Old Elsie and Steinie Hislop—she was scarcely old Elsie then—are *they* still alive? My poor brother Dick ; he mourned for me, I suppose—*she*, too, perhaps."

"They named me after you," said Lennard, in a low voice.

"God bless and rest them!" said Don Juan, while, encouraged by the unexpected turn matters had taken, Dora's little hand stole furtively into Lennard's.

"A writer has it that 'in the history of every man who has reasons for being out of his own country there must be something—some debt, misfortune, imbecility, or crime;' well," continued Don Juan, whom we should now rather designate as the elder Blair, "my cause for exile and wandering was an unfortunate early attachment to one who never returned my love."

"Oh, papa," said Dora, with earnest and dilated eyes, and greatly shocked to learn that her mamma had ever a predecessor; "tell us of this—I at least hear it all now for the first time."

"From the beginning to the end, in that unhappy love for the same girl, we were rivals, my brother Dick and I—but never, God be thanked, were we enemies. To go into all the details of those days—my bitter pain, my silent anguish, my torture and despair when I found that she preferred my brother to me, and when their marriage-day came, would

now, when all passions are dead within me, be but a useless and a wicked task, indeed."

"Poor papa!" said Dora, parenthetically.

"Richard was extravagant, and yearly lost vast sums on the turf; he loved me well, but I would not be dependent on him, after he—as I deemed it—robbed me of my bride. They were to be married on Beltane morning; but for me to be present as my brother's groomsman was beyond my power of endurance; so, on the evening before, I took the rail for Glasgow in a mood of mind little to be envied, with a few pounds in my pocket, and bidding farewell to home, unnoticed and unknown, under the name of John Lennard, sailed from the Clyde in a clipper ship for the United States. In the North Atlantic our vessel sprang a leak, after being struck by lightning and otherwise damaged in a storm. As she was sinking fast we had to abandon her, and betake us to the boats. For days and nights after this we were tossed about by the waves and wind, enduring the extremities of hunger, thirst, and despair, till the *Montezuma*, a Spanish barque from Cadiz, picked us up. She was bound for Vera Cruz, but landed us at Tampico. There I obtained employment from a Scottish planter—a veteran of the Venezuelan Legion—whose life I had saved when the diligencia was attacked by robbers, as the overseer of his estates; and being careful and thrifty, I soon began, in this land of gold and silver, of fire and sunshine, verdure and fertility, where the season is but one eternal spring, to amass money almost

without its being the result of an effort, for it seemed to pour in upon me.

“Amid the strange scenes of this vast new world, I thought, nephew, to forget the disappointments and sorrows of the old ; I was young, and in time I did so.

“You know the proverb of what one should do when in Rome ; so, in Mexico I did as the Mexicans do, and became thoroughly one of themselves, outwardly and completely *à l’Espagnole*. Here Heaven prospered me, beyond my deserts perhaps, and during a residence of nearly thirty years nothing save the loss of my dear wife and two sisters of Dora, for I married a wealthy Spanish lady of Tampico, has marred my tranquillity. Increasing years, the habits of business, experience, and the acquisition of wealth alter and modify the characters of most men ; so have they changed and toned down mine ; but I have remained in Mexico as your Englishmen usually remain in India, only to make money that I may return home and enjoy it in the winter of my days ; and now the time for doing so has come—home to Scotland—to the home of my childhood and youth ; to the place before which every other has paled in my memory !

“I begin to have the longing that comes on every wanderer at some time of his career, to die at home, and, as I have said, we are on the eve of a revolution here, which might imperil all I possess, I have transferred it home before me, and have sunk

a princely fortune in the British funds and elsewhere. Such is the brief story of my life, nephew Lennard, minus, of course, a thousand details."

"Oh, uncle," said the younger Blair, with a pathos in his tone, "and all this while—those long thirty years—during which you were realizing this enormous wealth, and while my poor father, your only brother, was sinking lower and lower, parting with acre after acre, and farm after farm, amid debts and difficulties—imprudences, I admit—you never wrote—never thought of him!"

"There you wrong me."

"He never knew of your existence."

"I both thought of him and wrote to him again and again, till I grew weary, and then indignant; for, if not dead, I believed he had committed my memory to oblivion."

"Those letters never reached him, otherwise I should have known of them. By some singular mischance all must have miscarried."

"And you were my Brito-Spanish correspondent in the office of Vere & Co.? How passing strange! I remember on that day when the alguazils brought you before me in the town-house, on your speaking, a chord of memory was struck in my heart, and I felt disturbed and restless in my efforts to recall the past; confused and dreamy ideas which I strove in vain to account for and unravel, crowded thick and fast upon me. It must have been your likeness to my poor brother Richard—yea, to myself, as a lad in earlier years; for again and again I asked of myself,

where have I seen this face, and where heard that voice? When jestingly I said we were namesakes, how little could I imagine that we were related to each other—and so nearly too!”

Dora’s hand was still clasped in that of Lennard, who, after a pause, during which his newly-discovered uncle had been regarding him attentively, said in a soft voice—

“Uncle, remember the love that sent you into exile, and pity our’s—mine and Dora’s!”

“We shall see in time what we shall see,” the other replied, smiling.

“Then may she wear my father’s ring?” asked Lennard.

“She may,” replied John Blair, as we shall name him for the sake of distinction, and smilingly he placed it on her tiny finger; then thoughtfully he added, “alas on what mere casualties every event of life turns—what straws may decide the destiny of a man!”

“True, uncle,” said Lennard (who rather liked to term him thus); had a wretched fellow not picked away the pocket-book of José Saavedra at Preston I had not made your daughter’s acquaintance, or won her confidence, perhaps. Had another luckless wretch not deluded and robbed me in Liverpool I should have sailed by the *Valparaíso*, and not by the ship which has proved indeed a Golden Dream to me; and Dora too, probably, would never have had on her finger that dear old ring which, as if it had been a magic one, has led to all this dis-

covery ; more than all, she might have perished at the Arenas ! ”

“ It is well ; no distance should ever break the ties of family :

For kindred blood, old proverbs deem,
Is warmer than the mountain stream.

So says Scott ; and I feel much of this forgotten spirit welling up in my heart now.”

“ And so old Blairavon has come into the market, after all uncle ? ”

“ Vere was not solvent when he executed his trust deed, so the creditors seized all. I saw the estate advertised in an English paper, and wrote at once for its purchase. The vulgar are ever prone to weave up mysteries and horrors with the history of any old house and family, and nowhere so much as at home in old romantic Scotland. Thus it is a local tradition that the fortune of him who possesses the lands of Blairavon depends upon the further proprietary, as you of course have heard, of a block, known as the Charter Stone——”

“ Which is mine ! ” exclaimed Lennard laughing, and with radiant eyes, “ mine, uncle ! ”

“ Yours—how ? ”

“ By a registered deed,” he replied, and then proceeded to relate how the retention of this relic of the Druid days had been solemnly enjoined him by his father’s dying request, “ Do you remember, Uncle Lennard, that just before your disappearance,

you carved your name upon it, where it can be distinctly seen to this day?"

"I do—I do remember—of a verity, truth is stranger than fiction!"

"By that act, fate would seem to have infest you in the old estate," said Lennard, laughing.

The story of Dora's voyage with him, and their past intimacy was now more thoroughly gone into and explained; and when the elder Blair learned how Lennard had protected her on the island from the outrageous Trocadero, and much more than she, with all her confidence in her parents' love, dared to tell, but all of which José Saavedra, natheless his duplicity and grasping spirit, was afterwards compelled to corroborate, he was filled with gratitude to this young kinsman, and with pity for his unmerited misfortunes.

The more he saw of his nephew, the more he loved him, and the same sentiment which inspired him, after so many years of absence and estrangement, to purchase back the old chateau and lands beside the Avon, led him to view with growing favour Lennard's regard for his cousin Dora; and he was never weary of hearing from him, as from a voice of the past, or from far away beyond the sea, accounts of the old place at home, of those who were still surviving there, and might still remember him.

When he looked at Lennard, the memory of his parents' faces and home and hearth—of Blairavon with all its associations, Oakwoodlee with its white gables and belt of Scottish pines, Craigellon with its

loch, the Tor Hill and the Mains of Kaims, the church built by John of Strathbroc, and the older fane of Inchmachan, all came back like a flood upon his heart ; the present fled—the past returned ; and he would say, laughing,—

“By Jove, I’ll Don-me no more ; but, thank God, shall be once again John Lennard Blair in the dear old country.”

He had not seen his elder brother Richard for thirty years, yet he could note, in Lennard’s bearing, voice, and eyes, and in his use of many a familiar home-word, much that recalled this brother ; for Lennard inherited many traits of his father in a remarkable degree, without his worst and weakest, his silly feudal pride and spendthrift extravagance.

Dora was *not* sent back to the Guadaloupe convent, somewhat to the indignation of her aunt, the Hermana Santa Teresa ; and one day she and Lennard were left in perfect happiness by Uncle Lennard, saying with a kind and soft smile, when he surprised them together in a garden seat,—

“So, so, I see that you are fonder of each other than cousins need quite to be ; but my one ewe lamb, as I call her—the last survivor of my little flock of three—cannot be taken from me, Lennard, either by you or any one else.”

“No, dear papa,” said Dora, “I shall stay with you ever and always—ever and always ; but,” she added, with *näiveté*, “may not Lennard stay with us, too ?”

“Blairavon is mine, and Oakwoodlee also, and

they shall be yours and Lennard's after I am gone. Till then, you shall live with me, and so, my darling girl shall be by my side till life ends, and that is all I care for now."

"Papa, papa!" cried Dora, as she sprang into his open arms and kissed him on both cheeks in a transport of tears.

"Dora, there is nothing in the world that I could do and would leave undone for your happiness," exclaimed John Blair in a flush of affection.

"Truly," thought Lennard in his heart, "but this is Utopia at last."

CHAPTER XXX.

CONCLUSION.

THE reader may now foresee how our drama should end.

Knowing the lawlessness and the temperament of the half-Spanish, half-Indian people among whom he found himself—their fiery and impulsive, jealous and treacherous nature, Lennard Blair was not without occasional fears that Ignacio Saavedra or his uncle José might seek to get rid of him quietly ; but time passed on, and he heard nothing of them.

The pronunciamiento was daily expected to break forth in the city of Mexico, and in his heart Lennard blessed it, as the preparations for his marriage with Dora and for their departure were thus made without delay ; and now they knew that, unless something most unforeseen intervened, they were to sail within a month by the first steam-liner for Liverpool *via* Kingston and Port-au-Prince.

Engaged people are usually so absorbed in them-

selves, as to be a bore to others and to be bored by them; so we have no intention of intruding on the drives, rides, and rambles of our lovers during the last month of their happy sojourn, in which day after day rolled fleetly past, and saw them losing their way, and forgetful of the world amid the orange-groves and wonderful gardens of the hacienda, in paths that were literally tunnels of purple, white, and crimson flowers—or in solitary places where a passing muleteer, or a half-clad Indian alone might pass to break the solitude; and from whence on one hand they might see the city of Vera Cruz with its spires and sixteen domes, the bay of Vergara opening into the Gulf of Mexico—that sea they were so soon again to travel together; and on the other, upheaved the eternal mountains crowned with snows—the granite summits of the Cordilleras of Anahuac that look down on the western plains and the city of Montezuma: and then there were the evenings and the nights, when side by side, telling of their love, of their coming marriage and of their departure, of their long and glorious future—or when lost in happy reverie, hand in hand and half-embraced they sat on the terraces of the villa, while the air was laden with the perfume of that lovely region of flowers (where in the days of Cortez a bouquet was deemed the most valuable gift that could be given to an ambassador), and while the fire-flies flashed around them, the distant sea slept in the light of the silver moon, the blue vault above was gemmed with stars, and ever and anon the red

volcanic gleams shot upward from the snow-clad summit of the Tuxtli.

They were left much to themselves, for the elder Blair—Don Juan, we had almost named him—spent most of his time in the city “winding up” his monetary affairs.

In romances we meet, and in real life we frequently hear, of couples that were made for each other—of matches that are made in heaven, and so forth—but Dora and Lennard Blair seemed as if their characters, tastes, tone and perceptions were identically formed together; as if *each* were the other's *half*; and then all the bars, hindrances, and annoyances which make up the usual “prologue to a love-match” had certainly not been wanting in their instance.

During their time of happy dreams, a European letter came to Lennard.

It was from his old friend, Frank Feverley, announcing that he had been married for some weeks to his early and only flame, Milly Montgomerie, the widowed Lady Wharton Foster (the pale little beauty with the quiet dark eyes) married too, by old Dr. Magnus Kirkford; that he had relinquished practice, and, as her father was dead, had taken up his residence at Monkwood Moat, intending to devote himself to the education of her little son and to the life of a country gentleman.

“Ranald Cheyne, of the Haughs—that hearty old fox-hunter—has just heard of all that has come to pass with you,” continued the Doctor; “and he looks

forward with delight to the time when he shall plant his boot-tops under your mahogany and be again the guest of a Blair of Blairavon—wherein, by the way, your uncle's agents here have duly installed Elsie and Steinie to set all things right for your home-coming. Cheyne's eldest daughter Flora has become Mrs. D. P. Dabchick (you remember the bumptious little barrister!) who has succeeded his friend Shoddy in a sheriffship. He had a destiny as well as Œdipus, but it was a briefless one; however his long career of (perhaps) unscrupulous press-work in defence of his party has been rewarded at last, and he has got both a wife and a post far above his talents and origin."

All this sounded very like small gossip on that side of the Atlantic Ocean; but still it was a voice from home, and Lennard read over the letter more than once to his uncle.

In the little chapel of the hacienda, a fane situated in a spot where the pink and white hawthorn bushes and a grassy bank covered with yellow buttercups and white daisies reminded Lennard of his home, they were married by the chaplain of the Governor. The union of cousins is not permitted in Mexico without a licence; but a certain number of doubloons had obtained that, and moreover, they were to reside far from the Tierra Caliente.

We need not expatiate on the beauty of the girlish bride, her diamonds, or on her wonderful lace dress which cost fifty dollars a *vara* (the Mexican yard), or how freely Lennard and his

uncle scattered handfuls of gold as they came forth to the carriage, when the brown leperos ran hobbling after them in hideous crowds, shouting—

“Caridad senora y senores; Caridad, by the souls of your mothers—by the soul of her you love!” and the uptossed pistoles fell in sparkling showers through the sunny air.

The little padrino and his sullen nephew were not present, but no hearts were broken by their absence; the captain, Salvador Gonzalez y Llano, and a few select friends attended them, and Mencia waited on her mistress. There was no display, no marriage-feast, for they were soon to depart; and the red funnel of the very ship by which they were to sail was visible in the bright blue bay from the pointed windows of the chapel.

The previous order of destiny was now inverted, and it was on the *first* of May—on the very day when the dreaded Revolution broke forth, when the roses are over in the land of Montezuma and the waysides are bordered by giant dahlias and marigolds—that their vessel, a splendid Liverpool liner, steamed past the great façade and towering batteries of San Juan de Ulloa; and when Dora, once more in her little hat and veil, stood by Lennard’s side, her hands clasped on his arm while taking a farewell look of picturesque Vera Cruz and the summit of Tuxtli.

The spirit of the elder Blair was a little depressed for a time, on seeing the land of his thirty years’

prosperous labour, and where the graves of his wife and children lay, fading astern ; but he said—

“All is ever for the best—though at times we do not think so. In all your mischances and misfortunes Lennard, and in those of my earlier years, we must *now* recognize the great Guiding Hand that dispenses or brings to pass many a blessing we should never have known had our own selfish wills and narrow wishes had their way in the Battle of Life.”

THE END.





